



<div>  <div> Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS THURSDAY – 20 OCT 2022 </div>  </div>			
	International	National	Regional and Local
Events, Opportunities Go to articles	10/20 Day 239 of the Russia invasion 10/20 Shadow govt. plots in Putin's backyard 10/20 Ukraine closing in on Russia war criminals 10/20 US examines wreckage of kamikaze drones 10/20 Ukraine rolling blackouts to conserve power 10/20 UK prime minister resigns 10/20 Philippines scraps Russia deal, buys US 10/20 Beijing steps up Covid preventive measures 10/19 EU to sanction Iran over drones 10/19 Iran drones in Ukraine crowded skies 10/19 Russia missiles strike across Ukraine 10/19 Russia relocates civilians out Kherson 10/19 Downing drones exceeds Russia costs 10/19 Russia mercenaries gain in east Ukraine 10/19 Russia war in Ukraine enters new phase 10/19 Putin tightens Russia security measures 10/19 Putin declares martial law annexed areas 10/19 Russia moves troops, equipment out Syria 10/19 Ukraine advances put limits Russia options 10/19 Norway: 'foreign intelligence' drone flights 10/19 Finland to build Russia border fence? 10/19 Taiwan 'fully prepared' China invasion 10/19 China pushes deeper into citizens' lives 10/19 China drops goal overtaking US economy 10/19 WHO: Covid still global health emergency 10/19 WHO: 'dire shortage' of cholera vaccines	10/20 Heating worries mount: costs, uncertainty 10/20 Nuclear power industry has Russia problem 10/20 Food crisis 2023: far worse than imaginable 10/19 'Great ShakeOut' quake safety movement 10/19 Covid death rates imbalance shifted; why? 10/19 Arizona refuses remove border containers 10/19 Global first: Florida gas stations to sell pot 10/19 St Louis police resignations 'critical mass' 10/19 Health issues drinking Navy jet fuel water 10/19 Florida post-lan hundreds still in shelters 10/19 Millions in South under frost, freeze alerts 10/19 Pacific Northwest hot, smoky October	10/19 Video game to boost quake preparedness 10/19 Duck & cover: Great Washington ShakeOut 10/19 Doctors urge: flu shots, Covid boosters 10/19 Grocery chain merger impact to Seattle? 10/19 Tacoma: defective switch in rail derailment 10/19 Sawant: SPD not investigating poop vandal 10/19 Seattle clinic to offer free eye exam, glasses 10/19 Spokane PD plan: more officers on street 10/19 Forests burning in western Cascades 10/19 Area schools cancel outdoor activities 10/19 Seattle air quality among worst in world 10/19 Officials: wildfire caused by pyrotechnic 10/19 Severe drought torments British Columbia
Cyber, Tech Awareness Go to articles	10/20 New version 'FurBall' Android spyware 10/20 Medibank's health data held for ransom 10/20 Millions of .git folders exposed to public	10/20 Malicious apps 20M downloads Play Store 10/19 Airport GPS interference stumps FAA 10/19 TSA new cyber rules for railroad carriers 10/19 Poor, less white areas worst internet deals 10/19 Microsoft data breach exposes contact info 10/18 WeChat midterm elections misinformation	10/19 MultiCare system reveals security breach
Terrorism, Extremism Go to articles	10/20 ISIS fighters terrorize Mozambique 10/20 Evolution violent extremist cyber landscape 10/19 Hamas back in Syria after years of tension	10/19 Pentagon: terror attacks in Africa up 300%	
Suspicious, Unusual Go to articles	10/20 World's biggest animal disease outbreak 10/19 Oceans are warming faster than ever	10/19 North America bodies of water drying up	10/19 Portland homeless camp: 150 stolen cars
Crime, Criminals Go to articles	10/20 Bomb explosions Myanmar prison kill 8 10/19 Maritime piracy lowest levels in decades 10/19 Interpol: financial, cybercrime top concerns	10/20 DOJ: 5 Russians sanctions evasion scheme 10/19 Charges: violating US export laws 10/19 Arrest: guns in vehicle near US Capitol	10/19 Fatal shooting Seattle's Central District 10/19 Massive backlog mentally ill defendants 10/19 SPD student officer charged: cyberstalking

[DISCLAIMER and FAIR USE Notice](#)

Events, Opportunities

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	10/20 Food crisis 2023: far worse than imaginable
SOURCE	https://www.zerohedge.com/geopolitical/food-crisis-2023-going-be-far-worse-most-people-would-dare-imagine
GIST	I am trying to sound the alarm about this as loudly as I can. The global food crisis just continues to intensify, and things are going to get really bad in 2023. As you will see below, two-thirds of European fertilizer production has already been shut down, currency problems are causing massive headaches for poor nations that need to import food, global weather patterns continue to be completely

crazy, and the bird flu is killing millions upon millions of chickens and turkeys all over the planet. On top of everything else, the war in Ukraine is going to restrict the flow of agricultural and fertilizer exports from that part of the world for a long time to come, because there is no end to the war in sight. In essence, **we are facing a “perfect storm” for global food production, and that “perfect storm” is only going to get worse in the months ahead.**

Global hunger has been on the rise for years, and the UN World Food Program is warning that we are heading for [“yet another year of record hunger”](#)...

The world is at risk of yet another year of record hunger as the global food crisis continues to drive yet more people into worsening levels of severe hunger, warns the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in a call for urgent action to address the root causes of today’s crisis ahead of World Food Day on October 16.

The global food crisis is a confluence of competing crises – caused by climate shocks, conflict and economic pressures – that has pushed the number of severely hungry people around the world from 282 million to 345 million in just the first months of 2022. The U.N. World Food Programme scaled up food assistance targets to reach a record 153 million people in 2022, and by mid-year had already delivered assistance to 111.2 million people.

But as I have [consistently warned](#), **this is only just the beginning.**

Eventually, there will be billions of people that don’t have enough to eat on a regular basis.

In all my years, I have never seen hunger spread so rapidly. In fact, **there are large numbers of people that are now facing starvation [in the backyard of the United States](#)...**

The United Nations is warning that hunger in one of Haiti’s biggest slums is at catastrophic levels, as gang violence and economic crises push the country to “breaking point”.

Nearly 20,000 people in the capital’s impoverished Cité Soleil area have dangerously little access to food and could face starvation, the UN says,

Across Haiti, almost five million are struggling with malnutrition.

“Haiti is facing a humanitarian catastrophe,” a top UN official said.

But most people in the western world won’t care until they are going hungry themselves. Unfortunately, that day may be a lot closer than a lot of people ever imagined.

Right now, a whopping two-thirds of all fertilizer production capacity in Europe [has already been shut down](#) because of the skyrocketing price of natural gas...

Europe’s fertilizer crunch is deepening with more than two-thirds of production capacity halted by soaring gas costs, threatening farmers and consumers far beyond the region’s borders.

Russia’s squeeze on gas shipments in the wake of Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine is hurting industries across Europe. But fertilizer companies are being especially affected because gas is both a key feedstock and a source of power for the sector.

There simply will not be enough fertilizer for European farmers in 2023.

And there won’t be enough for everyone else that depends on fertilizer production from Europe. This is a really big deal, because without fertilizer we would only be able to feed approximately half the planet.

Do you want to volunteer to be among those that don’t get enough food?

Meanwhile, the surging U.S. dollar is causing [immense headaches](#) for food importers all over the world...

In Ghana, importers are warning about shortages in the run up to Christmas. Thousands of containers loaded with food recently piled up at ports in Pakistan, while private bakers in Egypt raised bread prices after some flour mills ran out of wheat because it was stranded at customs.

Around the world, countries that rely on food imports are grappling with a destructive combination of high interest rates, a soaring dollar and elevated commodity prices, eroding their power to pay for goods that are typically priced in the greenback. Dwindling foreign-currency reserves in many cases has reduced access to dollars, and banks are slow in releasing payments.

The value of the U.S. dollar has been spiking because the Federal Reserve has been raising interest rates.

When the value of the dollar goes up, poor countries have to pay a lot more for food in their own local currencies.

At the same time, global weather patterns continue to go completely haywire.

This summer we witnessed the worst drought in Chinese history, Europe endured the worst drought in 500 years, and the western U.S. continued to suffer through the worst multi-year megadrought in at least 1,200 years.

Needless to say, all of this drought is absolutely devastating agricultural production.

According to the [Washington Post](#), “more than 80 percent of the U.S. is facing troubling dry conditions” right now. In the middle of the country, this has caused [a horrific crisis](#) for barge traffic along the Mississippi River...

The barge industry is quite important. It's crucial for moving aluminum, petroleum, fertilizer and coal, particularly on the Mississippi River and its tributaries. About 60% of the grain and 54% of the soybeans for U.S. export are moved via the noble barge. Barges touch more than a third of our exported coal as well.

Right now the barge industry — and all of us who depend on its wares — is mired in a crisis. Water levels on the Mississippi River Basin are at its lowest point in more than a decade.

Last week, approximately 2,000 barges were stuck at one point.

Sadly, very dry conditions are expected [“over the next several weeks”](#), and so things are not likely to get better any time soon...

Low water levels and dredging shuttered barge traffic heading north and south on the Mississippi last week. At one point, more than 100 towboats and 2,000 barges were stuck waiting. The blocked-off section of the river, between Louisiana and Mississippi, reopened Monday. Traffic is limited to one way, according to Petty Officer Jose Hernandez of the U.S. Coast Guard.

That's certainly better than zero-way traffic, but the Mississippi is still expected to become even more parched. Lisa Parker, a representative of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, told FreightWaves that drier conditions are expected over the next several weeks. The river is slurping up water reserves right now, Parker added, but those reserves will eventually run out.

As a result of this crisis, rates to move goods by barge have gone through the roof, and we could ultimately see massive amounts of agricultural produce rot [before it can get to consumers](#)...

Since many barges are stuck and cannot move at all, barge prices are reportedly hyperinflating. As of this writing, the highest USD per ton price shown is \$90.44. Prior to the massive spike, it was under \$10 to move a ton of goods.

The vast majority of the now-stranded bean piles and other farm goods were intended for major export terminals in the Gulf of Mexico. While at least some of them appear to be covered and ventilated, how long will they really last before spoiling?

On another note, we continue to see crabs die off at a staggering rate.

In fact, it is now being reported that the winter harvest of snow crab in Alaska has been suspended because the crab population has experienced [a catastrophic decline](#)...

Alaska officials have canceled several crab harvests in a conservation effort that sent shock waves through the crabbing industry in the region.

Officials canceled the fall Bristol Bay red king crab harvest and, for the first time on record, are also holding off on the winter harvest of snow crab, according to multiple reports.

The decision comes after stark recent population declines of the animals. Data from an NOAA eastern Bering Sea survey shows a 92% decline in overall snow crab abundance from 2018 to 2021, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game confirmed to USA TODAY. An 83% decline occurred from 2018 to 2022, as some small crab entered the population in 2022, according to the department's Division of Commercial Fisheries.

And thanks to the global bird flu pandemic, birds continue to die in staggering numbers as well.

If you can believe it, [nearly 100 million chickens and turkeys](#) have already been wiped out during this pandemic in the United States and Europe alone, and experts are warning that this pandemic [will only intensify](#) now that cold weather is arriving.

Those of you that have been to the grocery store lately already know that egg prices, chicken prices and turkey prices have surged to absolutely crazy levels. At this point, prices are so high that one recent survey found that one out of every four Americans plans to skip Thanksgiving this year [in order to save money](#)...

One in five Americans are unsure if they will be able to cover the costs of Thanksgiving this year, and one in four plan to skip it to save money, a recent Personal Capital survey found.

The state of economic affairs in President Joe Biden's America is affecting Americans' holiday plans. According to the survey, one quarter of Americans are planning to skip Thanksgiving this year to save money, and one in five "doubted they would have enough money to cover the costs of Thanksgiving this year."

More specifically, one-third expect their 2022 Thanksgiving dinner to be "smaller," and 45 percent, overall, said they are "financially stressed" by Thanksgiving.

Yes, things are already that bad.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/20 UK prime minister resigns
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/20/world/liz-truss-news
GIST	<p>LONDON — Prime Minister Liz Truss announced on Thursday that she would resign, just days after her new finance minister reversed virtually all of her planned tax cuts, sweeping away a free-market fiscal agenda that promised a radical policy shift for Britain but instead plunged the country into weeks of economic and political turmoil.</p> <p>"I cannot deliver the mandate on which I was elected," she said in brief remarks outside Downing Street. She said she had informed King Charles III that she was resigning as leader of the Conservative Party, and that she would remain leader and prime minister until a successor is chosen within a week.</p>

Her departure, after only six weeks in office, was a shockingly rapid fall from power, and throws her Conservative Party into further disarray, following the messy departure of Boris Johnson from Downing Street over the summer.

The announcement came minutes after Ms. Truss held an unscheduled meeting with Graham Brady, the head of a group of Conservative lawmakers known as the 1922 Committee that plays an influential role in selecting the party leader.

Ms. Truss's political viability had become tenuous after her proposals for broad unfunded tax cuts roiled markets and sent the pound's value plunging. She suffered a grave blow on Monday, when her newly appointed chancellor of the Exchequer, Jeremy Hunt, said that the government was undoing the last vestiges of Ms. Truss's tax proposals.

That announcement constituted one of the most dramatic reversals in modern British political history, and a humiliating repudiation of Ms. Truss's leadership. In recent weeks, support for her Conservative Party had collapsed in opinion polls and unrest among its lawmakers intensified, undermining her ability to remain in office.

Mr. Hunt also said that the government would end its huge state intervention to cap energy prices in April, replacing it with a still-undefined program that he said would promote energy efficiency but that could increase uncertainty for households facing rising gas and electricity prices.

Further chaos followed on Wednesday, when Ms. Truss was [jeered by opposition lawmakers while answering questions](#) in Parliament, and hours later was forced to fire one of her most senior cabinet ministers, the home secretary, Suella Braverman, over a security breach.

Ms. Braverman acknowledged having committed a technical breach of security rules, involving a government document that she sent to a lawmaker in Parliament through her personal email. But in her letter of resignation to Ms. Truss, she said she had "concerns about the direction of this government," accusing it of breaking pledges to voters and, in particular, failing to curb immigration.

On Wednesday, a vote on whether to ban hydraulic fracking erupted into a near melee, with accusations that ministers manhandled Conservative lawmakers and threatened them with retribution if they did not vote to support Ms. Truss.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/20 Ukraine rolling blackouts to conserve power
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/10/20/ukraine-rolling-blackouts-conserve-electricity/1641666253536/
GIST	<p>Oct. 20 (UPI) -- Rolling blackouts began in Ukraine on Thursday morning as officials attempt to conserve energy amid Russia's continued attacks on its critical civilian infrastructure.</p> <p>Ukrainian electric utility Ukrenergo said that rolling blackouts will occur between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. Thursday with local distribution networks to determine when regions will be disconnected.</p> <p>"The enemy's constant missile attacks are destroying our energy infrastructure, and energy workers need time to restore it. At the same time, it is getting colder outside, which traditionally encourages us to consume more electricity. But we need to be very conscious and frugal with our electricity consumption in order to get through the next winter as well as possible," the utility said in a statement published Thursday to Telegram.</p> <p>Ahead of Thursday, Ukrenergo had warned Ukrainians to ensure that their phones, power banks, flashlights and batteries were charged, and that they had water, warm socks and blankets at the ready.</p>

On Wednesday, Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko appealed to residents via Telegram to reduce their electricity consumption as much as possible during peak hours.

He called on residents to not use microwave ovens, electric kettles, air conditioners or heaters and for entrepreneurs and owners of shops, cafes and restaurants to reduce the lighting of signs and screens.

"Even a small savings and reducing of electricity consumption in each residence will help to stabilize the operation of the national energy system," he said.

On Thursday, Klitschko announced that 21 of 38 electric trollies in the city would be replaced with buses as part of the conservation effort.

Ukraine has adopted the measures as its energy infrastructure has been decimated in recent attacks by Russia, which has been targeting civilian infrastructure.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said Tuesday that as of Oct. 10, more than 30% of Ukraine's power stations have been destroyed.

On Wednesday night, he said three more facilities were gone.

"Of course, we will do everything possible to restore the normal energy capabilities of our country. But it takes time. And this requires our joint efforts. Tomorrow, they are needed more than before," he said in his nightly address. "Tomorrow, it is very important that the consumption is as conscious as possible."

Zelensky said he had strategy security meetings with energy companies on Wednesday in which they discussed steps to mitigate consequences of the breakdown of the energy system.

"We are working to create mobile power points for critical infrastructure of cities, towns and villages," he said in a statement about the discussions.

Russian's recent barrage of attacks on civilian infrastructure has attracted the condemnation of leaders of democratic countries, including from Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, the EU's executive branch.

On Wednesday, she called the attacks on civilian infrastructure "war crimes."

"Targeted attacks on civilian infrastructure with the clear aim to cut off men, women, children from water, electricity and heating with the winter coming -- these are acts of pure terror," she told lawmakers in a speech. "And we have to call it as such."

Early Thursday, the Ukrainian government attempted to use the issue of rolling blackouts as a call for unity, stating they will live without electricity in order to expel the Russians from their borders.

"This is why Ukraine will win this war," Zelensky tweeted. "I thank all fellow Ukrainians for saving power at their homes today."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/20 Nuclear power industry has Russia problem
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/americas-new-nuclear-power-industry-has-russian-problem-2022-10-20/
GIST	WASHINGTON/LONDON, Oct 20 (Reuters) - U.S. firms developing a new generation of small nuclear power plants to help cut carbon emissions have a big problem: only one company sells the fuel they need, and it's Russian.

That's why the U.S. government is urgently looking to use some of its stockpile of weapons-grade uranium to help fuel the new advanced reactors and kick-start an industry it sees as crucial for countries to meet global net-zero emissions goals.

"Production of HALEU is a critical mission and all efforts to increase its production are being evaluated," a spokesperson for the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) said.

The energy crisis triggered by the war in Ukraine has renewed interest in nuclear power. Backers of smaller, next-generation reactors say they are more efficient, quicker to build, and could turbocharge the shift away from fossil fuels.

But without a reliable source of the high assay low enriched uranium (HALEU) the reactors need, developers worry they won't receive orders for their plants. And without orders, potential producers of the fuel are unlikely to get commercial supply chains up and running to replace the Russian uranium.

"We understand the need for urgent action to incentivize the establishment of a sustainable, market-driven supply of HALEU," the DOE spokesperson said.

The U.S. government is in the final stages of evaluating how much of its inventory of 585.6 tonnes of highly enriched uranium to allocate to reactors, the spokesperson said.

The fact that Russia has a monopoly on HALEU has long been a concern for Washington but the war in Ukraine has changed the game, as neither the government nor the companies developing the new advanced reactors want to rely on Moscow.

HALEU is enriched to levels of up to 20%, rather than around 5% for the uranium that powers most nuclear plants. But only TENEX, which is part of Russian state-owned nuclear energy company Rosatom, sells HALEU commercially at the moment.

While no Western countries have sanctioned Rosatom over Ukraine, mainly because of its importance to the global nuclear industry, U.S. power plant developers such as X-energy and TerraPower don't want to be dependent on a Russian supply chain.

"We didn't have a fuel problem until a few months ago," said Jeff Navin, director of external affairs at TerraPower, whose chairman is billionaire Bill Gates. "After the invasion of Ukraine, we were not comfortable doing business with Russia."

CHICKEN AND EGG

Nuclear power currently generates about 10% of the world's electricity and many countries are now exploring new nuclear projects to improve their energy supply and energy security, as well as to help meet goals for cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

But with large-scale projects still challenging for reasons including huge up-front costs, project delays, cost overruns and competition from cheaper energy sources such as wind, several developers have proposed so-called small modular reactors (SMR).

While the SMRs on offer from companies such as EDF (EDF.PA) and Rolls-Royce (RR.L) use existing technology and the same fuel as traditional reactors, nine out of 10 of the advanced reactors funded by Washington are designed to use HALEU.

Proponents say these advanced plants need less frequent refuelling and are three times as efficient as traditional models. Some analysts say this means they will ultimately overtake conventional nuclear technology, though the designs have yet to be tested on a commercial scale.

The average levelised cost of electricity - the price needed for advanced projects to break even - is \$60 per megawatt-hour compared with \$97 for conventional plants, according to data from research group the Energy Innovation Reform Project.

Some analysts say the price difference might be narrower at the moment, because the smaller advanced reactors using HALEU don't yet have economies of scale from mass production.

Companies in the United States and Europe have plans to produce HALEU on a commercial scale but even in the most optimistic scenarios, they say it would take at least five years from the point they decide to proceed.

And this chicken and egg conundrum is complicating the smooth development of HALEU supply.

"Nobody wants to order 10 reactors without a fuel source, and nobody wants to invest in a fuel source without 10 reactor orders," said Daniel Poneman, chief executive of U.S. nuclear fuel supplier Centrus Corp (LEU.A).

For firms interested in new advanced reactors, such as Washington state's public utility Energy Northwest, fuel supplies are certainly an issue in the decision making process.

"A reliable HALEU supply is one of many factors under consideration," the company said in an emailed statement.

ALTERNATIVE SUPPLIES

The U.S. government recognised years ago that Russia's monopoly on HALEU could hamper the development of the advanced reactors it hopes will provide low-carbon energy at home and also be exported to markets in Europe and Asia.

The government awarded a shared-cost contract in 2019 to Centrus, the only company outside Russia which currently has a licence to make HALEU, to build a demonstration facility.

While the facility was due to start making HALEU this year, production has been put back to 2023, partly because of delays in getting hold of storage containers due to supply chain issues during the global pandemic, Centrus said.

Once the facility gets up and running, it will take five years before Centrus can start producing 13 tonnes of HALEU a year. But that's only a third of the amount the DOE projects will be needed for U.S. reactors by 2030.

TerraPower, for example, said it will need 15 tonnes of HALEU for the first fuel load of its advanced reactor.

Other potential HALEU producers are further behind.

French state-owned uranium mining and enrichment company Orano says it could start producing HALEU in five to eight years, but will only apply for a production licence once it has customers with long-term contracts.

In a response to a DOE request for information about how to establish a programme to support HALEU production, Orano said it would be down to the U.S. government to kick-start the industry.

"Orano's assessment shows that the single most important factor enabling success is the DOE guaranteeing a certain volume of demand," the company said in a statement on its website.

European uranium enrichment company Urenco, meanwhile, says it is considering sites in the United States and Britain for HALEU production but has yet to apply for licences.

CLOCK IS TICKING

For TerraPower and X-energy, which have projects planned in the U.S. states of Wyoming and Washington respectively, the clock is ticking.

Washington awarded them contracts to build two demonstration reactors by 2028 and shared the costs. But without Russian fuel, that deadline will fall well before any alternative commercial suppliers would be up and running.

While the 20% enrichment levels for HALEU are well below the roughly 90% level needed for weapons, companies need special licences to produce it. Additional security and certification requirements are also required for production sites, packaging and transportation of the fuel.

To speed up the process and break the deadlock, the U.S. government is looking to "downblend" weapons-grade highly enriched uranium sitting in its stockpile, though that will also take time.

The U.S. government said in 2016 it had downblended 7.1 tonnes between Sept. 30, 2013 and March 31, 2016. Asked this month whether the process had become any faster, the DOE said: "Downblending rates are consistently evaluated for acceleration opportunities."

The Inflation Reduction Act U.S. President Joe Biden signed in August contained \$700 million to secure HALEU supplies from the government and a consortium partnered with the DOE for use in advanced reactors and research.

In September, the White House asked Congress for another \$1.5 billion in a temporary government funding bill to boost domestic supply of low enriched uranium and HALEU, to address potential difficulties in accessing Russian fuel.

Lawmakers took the measure out of the bill over concerns about costs, though it remains a priority for some Biden officials, including Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm.

Last year, nuclear power stations in the United States imported about 14% of their uranium from Russia, along with 28% of their enrichment services, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/20 Philippines scraps Russia deal, buys US
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-europe-moscow-philippines-manila-c7bd86a34a7586d114d516c359007960
GIST	<p>MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Thursday backed a decision by his predecessor to cancel a deal to buy 16 Russian military heavy-lift helicopters and said his administration has “secured an alternative supply from the United States.”</p> <p>Marcos Jr. said at a news conference that the Philippine government will negotiate to get back part of the down payment it made to the Russian aircraft manufacturer.</p> <p>It was the first time Marcos Jr., who took office in June, has commented publicly on the touchy issue involving Russia. His predecessor, Rodrigo Duterte, signed the deal to buy the Mi-17 helicopters but decided before his term ended to cancel the contract due to fears of possible Western sanctions.</p> <p>“I think it was already determined by the previous administration that that deal will not carry through, will not go on,” Marcos Jr. said when asked to comment on a call by the Russian ambassador to Manila for the Philippine government to honor the helicopter deal.</p> <p>“We have secured an alternative supply from the United States,” the president said. He added, without elaborating, that the U.S. aircraft to be ordered by the Philippines would be manufactured in Poland.</p>

Moscow's ambassador to Manila, Marat Pavlov, told reporters Wednesday night that the Philippine government has not officially notified Russia of its decision to cancel the deal and a Russian company was proceeding to manufacture the Mi-17 helicopters after the Philippines made an initial payment.

Filipino pilots who would operate the helicopters have undergone Russian training, he said.

The Russian aircraft manufacturer was ready to deliver one of the helicopters in June "but unfortunately, it was not accepted by your government," Pavlov said.

"We are ready to fulfill all our obligations as a reliable partner of the Philippine side in the field of technical military cooperation and we consider that it will also be done by the Philippines," Pavlov said.

The Department of National Defense in Manila, however, said it formally notified the Russian aircraft manufacturer Sovtechnoexport in June and last month of the Philippine decision to cancel the contract. The defense department has convened a committee to thresh out the details of the withdrawal from the deal, department spokesman Arsenio Andolong said.

"Unfortunately, we made a down payment that we are hoping to negotiate to get at least a percentage of that back," Marcos Jr. said.

Former Philippine Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and Ambassador to Washington Jose Manuel Romualdez first confirmed the government's decision to terminate the deal in interviews with The Associated Press in July.

The decision, which was approved by Duterte, was made amid concern over possible Western sanctions which could include restrictions that would slow down bank transfers of the huge amounts of money that Filipino workers send home from the U.S. and other Western countries, according to Romualdez.

One of Duterte's Cabinet members, Finance Secretary Sonny Dominguez, had warned Duterte then that Western countries may withhold assistance that could help the Philippines deal with and recover from coronavirus outbreaks, two Philippine officials told the AP on condition of anonymity because they lacked the authority to discuss the issue publicly.

Romualdez has said Washington did not pressure the Philippines to drop the 12.7 billion-peso (\$215 million) deal with the Russians.

But following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February, countries that purchase Russian defense equipment could face Western sanctions, he said.

"I think it was really prudent specially for President Duterte to approve the cancellation of that contract because it can save us a lot of trouble," Romualdez told Manila-based foreign correspondents in August.

A U.S. offer to sell Boeing CH-47 Chinooks which was discussed last year by Lorenzana and his American counterpart, Lloyd Austin, could be considered to replace the Russian helicopter deal, Romualdez said.

Under the scrapped helicopter deal, which was signed in November, the first batch of the multi-purpose helicopters was scheduled for delivery by Russia's Sovtechnoexport in about two years. Aside from the 16 helicopters, one would have been given free to the Philippines, defense officials said.

The Russian-made helicopters could have been used for combat, search and rescue operations, and medical evacuations in the Southeast Asian archipelago, which is often battered by typhoons and other natural disasters, Philippine officials said.

	<p>In March, the Philippines voted “yes” on a U.N. General Assembly resolution that demanded an immediate halt to Moscow’s attack on Ukraine and the withdrawal of all Russian troops.</p> <p>When Duterte was in office, he nurtured close ties with Russian President Vladimir Putin, whom he once called his “idol,” and Chinese leader Xi Jinping while frequently criticizing U.S. security policies.</p> <p>The Philippines is a treaty ally of Washington, which has imposed heavy sanctions on Moscow aimed at pressuring it to withdraw from Ukraine.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/20 Heating worries mount: costs, uncertainty
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/congress-maine-business-government-and-politics-d4a3365ab40b8d0a7dfaf5e515a3797e
GIST	<p>JAY, Maine (AP) — Across the U.S., families are looking to the winter with dread as energy costs soar and fuel supplies tighten.</p> <p>The Department of Energy is projecting sharp price increases for home heating compared with last winter and some worry whether heating assistance programs will be able to make up the difference for struggling families. The situation is even bleaker in Europe, with Russia’s continued curtailment of natural gas pushing prices upward and causing painful shortages.</p> <p>In Maine, Aaron Raymo saw the writing on the wall and began stocking up on heating oil in 5-gallon increments over the summer as costs crept upward. He filled a container with heating oil as he could afford it, usually on paydays, and used a heating assistance program to top off his 275-gallon oil tank with the arrival of colder weather.</p> <p>His family is trying to avoid being forced into a difficult decision — choosing between food or heating their home.</p> <p>“It’s a hard one,” he said. “What are you going to choose for food, or what amount of fuel oil are you going to choose to stay warm?”</p> <p>A number of factors are converging to create a bleak situation: Global energy consumption has rebounded from the start of the pandemic, and supply was barely keeping pace before the war in Ukraine further reduced supplies.</p> <p>The National Energy Assistance Directors Association says energy costs will be the highest in more than a decade this winter.</p> <p>The Energy Department projects heating bills will jump 28% this winter for those who rely on natural gas, used by nearly half of U.S. households for heat. Heating oil is projected to be 27% higher and electricity 10% higher, the agency said.</p> <p>That comes against inflation rates that accelerated last month with consumer prices growing 6.6%, the fastest such pace in four decades.</p> <p>The pain will be especially acute in New England, which is heavily reliant on heating oil to keep homes warm. It’s projected to cost more than \$2,300 to heat a typical home with heating oil this winter, the energy department said.</p> <p>Across the country, some are urging utilities to implement a moratorium on winter shut-offs, and members of Congress already added \$1 billion in heating aid. But there will be fewer federal dollars than last year when pandemic aid flowed.</p>

In Jay, where Raymo lives with his partner, Lucinda Tyler, and 8-year-old son, residents were already bracing for the worst before the local paper mill announced it's going to close, putting more than 200 people out of work. That has the potential to wreak havoc on the town budget, and cause higher property taxes that will further eat into residents' budgets.

Both Raymo and Tyler work full-time jobs. He works as many as 70 or 80 hours a week in an orthopedists' office and she works from home in shareholder services for a financial services company. They don't qualify for much help even though they're scraping by to keep up with repairs, buy gas and put food on the table — and heat their 100-year-old home in a state known for bitter cold weather.

"We work significant hours but it seems that it's not enough," said Tyler, who wept with relief when she learned they qualified for even a modest amount of heating assistance.

Last month, Congress added \$1 billion in funding to Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, bringing the total to at least \$4.8 billion and making additional heating aid available for the start of the winter season.

The third hottest summer on record already strained LIHEAP funding, "so I am glad that we were able to secure these new resources before the cold of winter sets in," said Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy, a Democrat from Vermont.

But that level represents an overall reduction from last year, when federal pandemic relief pushed the total energy assistance package past \$8 billion.

Some are seeking help who've never done so in the past. In Auburn, Maine, 72-year-old Mario Zullo said he worked all his life and never asked for help until last year when he received heating assistance last year. The program helped upgrade his heating.

"It came to us at a time when we needed it the most," Zullo said.

Mark Wolfe, executive director of NEADA, said he fears the federally funded program won't be enough because of the high cost of energy and continued instability in energy markets. It could be even worse if the winter is especially cold, he said.

"The crisis is coming," he said. "There's a lot of uncertainty and factors in play that could drive these prices higher."

In Maine, the state has the nation's oldest population and it's the most reliant on heating oil, creating a double whammy.

"People are scared. They're worried. They're frustrated," said Lisa McGee, who coordinates the heating aid program for Community Concepts Inc. in Lewiston, Maine. "There's more anxiety this year."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/19 Norway: 'foreign intelligence' drone flights
SOURCE	https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20221019-norway-says-foreign-intelligence-behind-drone-flights
GIST	<p>Oslo (AFP) – Norway's Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store on Wednesday accused "foreign intelligence" services of being behind a recent slew of "unacceptable" drone flights in the country, indirectly pointing the finger at Russia.</p> <p>Earlier Wednesday, Norwegian police had announced the arrest of a Russian -- the son of a close confidant of President Vladimir Putin -- accusing him of illegally flying a drone in the Svalbard archipelago, located in the geopolitically strategic Arctic region.</p>

He was the seventh Russian arrested in the past few days suspected of illegally flying drones or taking photos in restricted areas in the Scandinavian country, which shares a border with Russia in the far north.

"It is obviously unacceptable for foreign intelligence to fly drones over Norwegian airports," Store told Norwegian public broadcaster NRK.

His remarks came just hours after a drone was observed near the airport in Bergen, Norway's second-biggest city, briefly suspending air traffic.

Along with several other Western nations, Norway has forbidden Russians and Russian entities from flying over its territory following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, whether by drone or aircraft.

Breaking that ban is punishable by a three-year prison term while unauthorised photography can merit a one-year sentence.

High alert

A number of mysterious drone flights have been observed in Norway in recent weeks.

Combined with the presumed sabotage on the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines in the Baltic Sea, the observations have prompted Oslo to beef up security around strategic infrastructure, in particular its oil and gas offshore platforms.

The latest Russian arrested in Norway was identified as Andrei Yakunin, the son of ex-Russian Railways boss Vladimir Yakunin, who is considered to be close to Putin.

Aged 47 and holding British and Russian nationality, Andrei Yakunin was arrested on Monday in Hammerfest in northern Norway, according to police and court documents.

"The suspect has admitted flying a drone in Svalbard," police official Anja Mikkelsen said.

Located about 1,000 kilometres (620 miles) from the North Pole, the Svalbard archipelago is a Norwegian territory strategically located in the heart of the Arctic.

It is home to a relatively large Russian community, and its special legal status enables foreign nationals to mine some of its natural resources.

Yakunin has been placed in custody for two weeks, and drones and electronics in his possession have been confiscated, police said.

On Monday, Russia's embassy in Oslo said "hysteria" in Norway was impacting "ordinary tourists", calling the ban on Russians flying drones "unjustified and discriminatory".

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/19 Russia mercenaries gain in east Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/19/europe/ukraine-war-bakhmut-struggle-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Bakhmut, UkraineCNN — The weather in Bakhmut deceives the senses, sunny and warm – almost peaceful.</p> <p>But a deafening boom of outgoing artillery from the critical eastern Ukrainian town shook that notion out of the system, as Ukrainian soldiers on Wednesday launched offensives to try to reclaim positions from Russian forces.</p> <p>Three men could be seen making a run for it out of town, one with a microwave strapped to his back.</p>

[Russia's war in Ukraine](#) has been going on for eight months. It's only when you descend into the city of Bakhmut that you really get a sense of the devastation and destitution that Russian President [Vladimir Putin](#)'s invasion has wrought.

Our guide is a Ukrainian military medic, who goes by the nom-de-guerre "Katrusya." In tinted sunglasses and fatigues, she slings our convoy into the center of the city at breakneck speed.

Flashing through the windows is a near ghost town.

"For the past two months, Russians have been trying to break into the city defenses and have not been successful," she tells us between cigarettes.

She took us to see a building that had just been shelled. Our car hadn't even come to a complete halt as another artillery shell hit close by. We scrambled for cover as more artillery rained down nearby for around 20 minutes.

The attacks are normal, says Katrusya, as she leans on a wall – a picture of composure – as we take shelter from the incoming shells.

"The artillery attacks fly every day so it's never quiet here. Other parts of the city take hits many times a day," she says.

A handful of residents are still on the streets of Bakhmut. Buildings have no windows; the streets are pockmarked with craters and industrial garbage bins have merged into small pools of trash.

Those who remain seem to live in a parallel universe. They're out on their bikes, running errands, and elderly women drag their shopping trolleys behind them, though which shops are open seems a mystery.

Sergey is one of those Bakhmut inhabitants still walking the streets. Asked if he is worried about the shelling he replies, "Afraid of what, mate? Everything is going to be okay."

He then stares out into the distance, almost as if he doesn't really believe his own words.

Katrusya says that the intense fighting has cost the lives of numerous soldiers and civilians here. "I cannot give you the number, but it is a lot... there are a lot of injured from both sides and also lots of dead."

She lost her husband fighting the Russians in Bakhmut just a month ago. Only antidepressants mask the pain, she says.

The struggle for Bakhmut has grown ever more ferocious in recent days. [Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky](#) has called the fighting in the city "the most difficult."

The significance of the city cannot be overstressed.

Bakhmut lies at a fork that points toward two other strategic towns in the Donetsk region: Konstantinivka to the southwest, and Kramatorsk and Sloviansk to the northwest. All three are key to Putin's total control of the region.

The scenes in Bakhmut, though, are different to those across the rest of the country, where Ukraine has largely been able to repel Russia's advance and even gain territory in recent weeks as Russian forces retreated at the end of September.

Here, Russian forces have made small, steady gains, largely thanks to [the Wagner group](#), which is considered by analysts to be a Kremlin-approved private military company.

Reports on social media and in Russian state media say Wagner mercenaries are on the outskirts of Bakhmut, in a small village called Ivangrad.

On social network Telegram, Wagner owner Yevgeny Prigozhin has acknowledged that resistance from the city is stiff.

“The situation near Bakhmut is stably difficult, the Ukrainian troops are putting up decent resistance and the legend of the fleeing Ukrainians is just a legend. Ukrainians are guys with the same iron balls as we are,” he wrote.

Katrusya says she’s come up against Wagner fighters and, despite their international notoriety, they seem more like a hodgepodge of soldiers for hire, she says.

“They are a rabble. There are a few, very well-trained professional fighters, but the majority of them have found themselves accidentally fighting in this war looking for money or for the ability to get out of jail,” she said.

In September, video surfaced appearing to show Prigozhin recruiting prisoners from Russian jails for Wagner, offering a promise of clemency [in exchange for six months’ combat service](#) in Ukraine.

Despite her heartbreak, Katrusya’s spirit isn’t dimmed. The one goal is victory.

“The price for Ukraine will be enormous,” she acknowledges. “We will lose the best of the best, the most motivated and trained but we will definitely win; we have no other choice, it is our land. We will win absolutely.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/20 US examines wreckage of kamikaze drones
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/10/20/russia-iran-kamikaze-drones/
GIST	<p>The U.S. government has examined the wreckage of Iranian-made drones shot down in Ukraine, deepening its insight into the unmanned craft that Russia has launched in a spate of kamikaze attacks on the country’s critical infrastructure, according to two U.S. officials.</p> <p>Information about the drones’ structure and technology could prove crucial in helping the United States and its Ukrainian allies better identify and ultimately defeat them before they can reach their targets. Officials said the process has been used in the past to study weaponry deployed by Iran’s proxies in conflicts in the Middle East. People interviewed for this report spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence collection.</p> <p>The Shahed-136 unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) used in this week’s attacks on the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, have targeted power stations and other utilities, killing at least four, authorities there have said. Their use by Russian forces has underscored the growing ties between Moscow and Tehran, alarming Western leaders whose sanctions and other punitive economic measures have drastically undercut the Kremlin’s ability to regenerate its military after eight months of war.</p> <p>The Iranian-made drones are being launched from three Russian military bases in Crimea and another position in Belarus, a Ukrainian official said. Tehran has dispatched advisers to Russian-controlled areas, where they have provided operators with technical instruction.</p> <p>It is unclear how the United States gained access to the drone wreckage, though the Pentagon coordinates closely with Ukraine’s military and maintains a small administrative presence at the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv. That team is led by a one-star Army general.</p>

The Shahed is a large, lumbering aircraft that flies very low and appears to have few metallic parts, making it difficult to detect with radars and other sensors before reaching its target. Examination of the wreckage may help overcome those challenges.

The drones' points of origin pose another challenge, the Ukrainian official said: They are too far for U.S.-supplied rocket artillery to strike, blunting options for destroying the aircraft before they are airborne.

Ukraine, which says it has [destroyed more than 220 Shahed-136 drones](#) since Sept. 13, appears to be studying the platform, Estonian Defense Minister Hanno Pevkur told reporters this week. Pevkur said it was of regional urgency to learn about the aircraft.

"We all have to understand that we all have to put our efforts to that. To understand how it works, and to understand how to take it down," he said. "Because it's not only the question of Ukraine at war at the moment, but it's a question of all of us who are in the situation where we are."

Iran produces a variety of drones and has reportedly supplied them to Hezbollah in Lebanon and Houthi rebels in Yemen, among other groups. The Pentagon believes Iran-allied forces have used them against U.S. military personnel in Syria, including in [an August attack](#) at the U.S.-run base at Tanf.

The Houthis claimed to have used Samad-3 drones to attack a refinery in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, last spring, and launched Samad-1 drones at Saudi Aramco facilities in other parts of the country. Those drones are distinct from the weapons used by Russia in Ukraine.

In February, the United Arab Emirates was hit by several drone and missile attacks claimed by the Houthis. In a military parade last month in Sanaa, the Yemeni capital, the Houthis reportedly displayed a local version of the Shahed-136.

Ukraine has asked the United Nations to examine the wreckage, to determine the aircraft's country of origin. In a letter dated Friday, Ukraine's U.N. ambassador invited "U.N. experts to visit Ukraine at the earliest possible opportunity to inspect recovered Iran-origin drones." The letter maintained that Iranian transfers of the drones would violate both U.N. sanctions against Iran and terms of the 2015 U.N. Security Council resolution on the Iran nuclear deal that year.

The Council held a closed-door meeting Wednesday to hear "an expert briefing ... on recent evidence that Russia illegally procured Iranian UAVs that it is using in its war on Ukraine," Nate Evans, spokesperson for the American U.N. mission, said in a statement after the session. "These UAVs were transferred from Iran to Russia in open violation of provisions" of the resolution approving the nuclear deal Iran signed with world powers.

Earlier this week, France and Britain — signers of the deal along with Iran, the United States, Germany, Russia and China — echoed Ukrainian charges that sending the drones to Russia violated a provision prohibiting Iran from transferring unmanned aerial vehicles with a range of more than 300 kilometers (186.4 miles) unless it had specific permission from the council.

"As was outlined during today's meeting," the statement from Evans said, "there is ample evidence that Russia is using Iranian-made UAVs" in its attacks on Ukraine. "By procuring these weapons in violation of U.N. Security Council Resolutions, Russia continues to flout international law in its pursuit of a senseless and brutal war."

The statement did not indicate any immediate action would be taken, although Evans said "we anticipate this will be the first of many conversations at the U.N. on how to hold Iran and Russia accountable for failing to comply with U.N. Security Council-imposed obligations."

The Shahed loiters in the air until it identifies a target, often a fixed position, and then dives into it, detonating onboard explosives. Unlike bigger reusable drones that fire missiles and return to a base, it flies low and slow.

Ukrainians call it “the lawn mower” because of the loud buzzing sound it makes. The distinct noise has served as a warning of its approach, allowing people to scramble for cover and brace for the explosion, which is smaller than the impact caused by conventional ballistic missiles.

The drones pose a significant problem, analysts say. Many defensive systems capable of defeating them are costly, are designed mostly for bigger threats like jets and helicopters, and take months or years to produce, limiting how many can be distributed and forcing military planners to prioritize sites deemed most vulnerable.

While Ukrainian air defenses have shown some success against the drones, even a few slipping through can cause havoc, said Samuel Bendett, an expert on the Russian military at CNA, a research group. “It’s a demonstration of Russian capability, and now they have cheap plentiful weapons that can constantly remind Ukrainians that their skies are not 100 percent safe,” he said. “It’s a very powerful psychological weapon.”

Russia’s performance with the Shaheds in Ukraine “suggests an evolution,” Bendett said. “They probably started with a basic concept the Houthis and the Iranians used themselves and built on it to possibly overwhelm Ukrainian air defenses, to fly around them, to circumnavigate them, in one way or another.”

Iranian military leaders will probably seek feedback from Russian commanders on how they have evaded Western air defenses, experts have said. Such information could aid Tehran in any potential attacks it pursues against its regional adversaries.

The United States has provided Ukraine with air defense systems capable of destroying drones. One, the Vampire, can take down drones with a launcher attached to a pickup truck.

The Pentagon also has promised to send Ukraine NASAMS, a surface-to-air missile system capable of intercepting ballistic missiles and other aerial threats. Two NASAMS are slated for delivery in the coming weeks, U.S. officials have said. Six others pledged to Ukraine are expected to take years to build and deliver.

There is no one-size-fits-all answer to air defense threats and to these drones specifically, experts say. They point to a diverse set of weapons capable of defending priority targets, from Stinger missiles, which are shoulder-fired weapons developed long ago, to newer, more sophisticated systems like the NASAMS, said Tom Karako, the director of the Missile Defense Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a think tank.

Also needed, Karako said, are electronic warfare systems that can disrupt the connection between drone and operator, taking it offline. “You may not need the world’s biggest interceptors,” he said, “but you are going to need something.”

The Pentagon has not indicated whether this week’s attacks in Kyiv would trigger a rush to deliver more anti-drone weapons. A senior military official pointed to the 1,400 Stingers the United States has provided Ukraine to date and contributions from other Western countries to bolster Ukraine’s air defenses.

Both the Saudis and the United Arab Emirates have said Patriot interceptors have been used to thwart Houthi missile attacks — along with, in the UAE, a THAAD defense system. Neither has specified the defenses they have used against drones.

Ukraine uses kamikaze drones as well. The Pentagon has provided its military with hundreds of Switchblades, which are much smaller than the Shahed and are designed to strike small groups of soldiers or armored vehicles, depending on the variant. While smaller and more evasive than the Iranian drones, they lack the range, with the larger Switchblade version able to travel 25 miles. The domestically produced RAM II also is in use, but its range tops out at 18 miles, making both weapons more suitable near the front lines.

HEADLINE	10/19 Covid death rates imbalance shifted; why?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/10/19/covid-deaths-us-race/
GIST	<p>SOMERVILLE, Tenn. — Skill Wilson had amassed more than three decades of knowledge as a paramedic, first in Memphis and then in Fayette County. Two places that felt like night and day.</p> <p>With only five ambulances in the county and the nearest hospital as much as 45 minutes away, Skill relished the clinical know-how necessary to work in a rural setting. Doing things like sedating patients to insert tubes into their airways.</p> <p>But when it came to covid-19, despite more than 1 million deaths nationwide, Skill and his family felt their small town on the central-eastern side of Fayette County, with its fields of grazing cattle and rows of cotton and fewer than 200 covid deaths since the start of the pandemic, was a cocoon against the raging health emergency.</p> <p>“It was a lot easier to stay away from others,” his widow, Hollie Wilson, said of the largely White and predominantly conservative county of about 42,000 residents. “Less people. Less chance of exposure.” Covid seemed like other people’s problems — until it wasn’t.</p> <p>The imbalance in death rates among the nation’s racial and ethnic groups has been a defining part of the pandemic since the start. To see the pattern, The Washington Post analyzed every death during more than two years of the pandemic. Early in the crisis, the differing covid threat was evident in places such as Memphis and Fayette County. Deaths were concentrated in dense urban areas, where Black people died at several times the rate of White people.</p> <p>“I don’t want to say that we weren’t worried about it, but we weren’t,” said Hollie, who described her 59-year-old husband as someone who “never took a pill.” After a while, “you kind of slack off on some things,” she said.</p> <p>Over time, the gap in deaths widened and narrowed but never disappeared — until mid-October 2021, when the nation’s pattern of covid mortality changed, with the rate of death among White Americans sometimes eclipsing other groups.</p> <p>A Post analysis of covid death data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention from April 2020 through this summer found the racial disparity vanished at the end of last year, becoming roughly equal. And at times during that same period, the overall age-adjusted death rate for White people slightly surpassed that of Black and Latino people.</p> <p>The nature of the virus makes the elderly and people with underlying health conditions — including hypertension, diabetes and obesity, all of which beset Black people at higher rates and earlier in life than White people — particularly vulnerable to severe illness and death.</p> <p>That wasn’t Skill.</p> <p>The virus also attacks unvaccinated adults — who polls show are more likely to be Republicans — with a ferocity that puts them at a much higher risk of infection and death.</p> <p>That was Skill.</p> <p>He joined the choir of critics opposing vaccination requirements, his rants in front of the television eventually wearing on Hollie, who, even if she agreed, grew tired of listening and declared their home “covid-talk free.”</p> <p>So, she said, Skill commiserated with like-minded people in Facebook groups and on Parler and Rumble, the largely unmoderated social networking platforms popular with conservatives.</p>

“We’re Republicans, and 100 percent believe that it’s each individual’s choice — their freedom” when it comes to getting a [coronavirus](#) shot, Hollie said in January. “We decided to err on the side of not doing it and accept the consequences. And now, here we are in the middle of planning the funeral.”

Capt. Julian Greaves Wilson Jr., known to everybody as Skill, died of covid Jan. 23, a month after becoming infected with the coronavirus. He fell ill not long after transporting a covid patient to the hospital. At the time he died, infection rates in Fayette County had soared to 40.5 percent among people taking coronavirus tests.

‘A different calculus’

When the coronavirus appeared in the United States, it did what airborne viruses do — latched onto cells in people’s respiratory tract, evaded innate immune responses and multiplied. The pathogen, free of politics or ideology, had a diverse reservoir of hosts and found fertile pathways for growth in the inequalities born from centuries of racial animus and class resentments.

Unequal exposure, unequal spread, unequal vulnerability and unequal treatment concentrated harm in communities that needed protection the most yet had the least. Cumulatively, Black, Latino and Native American people are 60 percent [more likely to die of covid](#).

But as the pandemic progressed, the damage done by the virus broadened, and the toxicity of modern-day politics came to the fore.

The Post analysis revealed the changing pattern in covid deaths. At the start of the pandemic, Black people were more than three times as likely to die of covid as their White peers. But as 2020 progressed, the death rates narrowed — but not because fewer Black people were dying. White people began dying at increasingly unimaginable numbers, too, the Post analysis found.

In summer 2021, the nation saw some of the pandemic’s lowest death rates, as vaccines, shoring up the body’s immune response, became widely available.

Then came the delta variant. The virus mutated, able to spread among the vaccinated. As it did, an erosion of trust in government and in medicine — in any institution, really — slowed vaccination rates, stymieing the protection afforded by vaccines against severe illness and death.

After delta’s peak in September 2021, the racial differences in covid deaths started eroding. The Post analysis found that Black deaths declined, while White deaths never eased, increasing slowly but steadily, until the mortality gap flipped. From the end of October through the end of December, White people died at a higher rate than Black people did, The Post found.

That remained true except for a stretch in winter 2021-2022, when the omicron variant rampaged. The Black death rate jumped above White people’s when the spike in cases and deaths overwhelmed providers in the Northeast, resulting in a bottleneck of testing and treatment.

When the surge subsided, the Black death rate once again dropped below the White rate.

“Usually, when we say a health disparity is disappearing, what we mean is that ... the worse-off group is getting better,” said Tasleem Padamsee, an assistant professor at Ohio State University who researched vaccine use and was a member of the Ohio Department of Health’s work group on health equity. “We don’t usually mean that the group that had a systematic advantage got worse.”

That’s exactly what happened as the White death rate surpassed that for Black people, even though Black Americans routinely confront stress so corrosive it causes them to age quicker, become sicker and die younger.

The shift in covid death rates “has vastly different implications for public health interventions,” said Nancy Krieger, professor of social epidemiology at Harvard University’s T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Officials must figure out how to connect with “communities who are ideologically opposed to the vaccine” while contending with “the cumulative impact of injustice” on communities of color.

“Think about the fact that everyone who is age 57 and older in this country was born when Jim Crow was legal,” she said. “What that did was intersect with covid-19, meaning that embodied history is part of this pandemic, too.”

So what contributed to the recent variation in death rates? And why?

The easy explanation is that it reflects the choices of Republicans not to be vaccinated, but the reasons go deeper. The Post interviewed historians and researchers who study the effects of White racial politics and social inequality on health, spoke with relatives and friends of those lost to covid, and compiled data from federal databases and academic studies.

What emerged is a story about how long-standing issues of race and class interacted with the physical and psychological toll of mass illness and death, unprecedented social upheaval, public policies — and public opinion.

Resilience gave way to fatigue. Holes left by rural hospital closures deepened. Medical mistrust and misinformation raged. Skeptics touted debunked alternatives over proven treatments and prevention. Mask use became a victim of social stigma.

Many Republicans decided they would rather roll the dice with their health than follow public health guidance — even when provided by President Donald Trump, who was booed after saying he had been vaccinated and boosted.

Researchers at Ohio State found Black and White people were about equally reluctant to get the coronavirus vaccine when it first became available, but Black people overcame that hesitancy faster. They came to the realization sooner that vaccines were necessary to protect themselves and their communities, Padamsee said.

As public health efforts to contain the virus were curtailed, the pool of those most at risk of becoming casualties widened. The No. 1 cause of death for 45-to-54-year-olds in 2021 was covid, according to federal researchers.

“I still remember when I was doing the mayor’s press conferences a few months into this, and I made note of the fact that most of those people who had died look like me,” said James E.K. Hildreth, president and CEO of Meharry Medical College, one of the nation’s oldest and largest private, historically Black academic health sciences center, in Nashville. Hildreth played a central role in the city’s pandemic response.

“I wondered aloud if it were reversed, would the whole nation not be more galvanized to fight this thing?” recalled Hildreth, an immunologist and member of an expert panel that advises the Food and Drug Administration on vaccines, including coronavirus shots.

After it became clear that communities of color were being disproportionately affected, racial equity started to become the parlance of the pandemic, in words and deeds. As it did, vaccine access and acceptance within communities of color grew — and so did the belief among some White conservatives, who form the core of the Republican base, that vaccine requirements and mask mandates infringe on personal liberties.

“Getting to make this decision for themselves has primacy over what the vaccine could do for them,” said Lisa R. Pruitt, a law professor at the University of California at Davis who is an expert in social inequality and the urban-rural divide. “They’re making a different calculus.”

It's a calculation informed by the lore around self-sufficiency, she said, a fatalistic acceptance that hardships happen in life and a sense of defiance that has come to define the modern conservative movement's antipathy toward bureaucrats and technocrats.

"I didn't think that that polarization would transfer over to a pandemic," Pruitt said.

It did.

A lifesaving vaccine and droplet-blocking masks became ideological Rorschach tests.

The impulse to frame the eradication of an infectious disease as a matter of personal choice cost the lives of some who, despite taking the coronavirus seriously, were surrounded by enough people that the virus found fertile terrain to sow misery. That's what happened in northern Illinois, where a father watched his 40-year-old son succumb to covid-19.

For Robert Boam, the increase in White deaths is politics brought to bear on the body of his son, though he's reluctant "to get into the politics of it all, but it all goes back to that."

Brian Boam was a PE teacher at an elementary school in suburban Chicago. On Christmas Eve, the entire family gathered at the elder Boam's home in an Illinois town where the first Lincoln-Douglas debate was held. Brian Boam was there with his 10-year-old daughter and 6-year-old son.

Robert Boam said his son had survived covid the year before, so "we got on his butt to get that booster shot when he was here for Christmas." And he did — but got sick again, the 73-year-old said. "Being vaccinated, and all that, and getting covid again kind of bummed him out."

Just after the new year, Brian Boam, who was hypertensive, went to a hospital feverish and vomiting. It took 10 hours to be seen and even longer for a bed to become available. As he waited, he sent what would be his last text message to his parents. Thanks for all you do. I love you.

He went into cardiac arrest in the emergency room and was transferred to Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, one of the nation's top academic hospitals. There, his family hoped he would be healed, but his organs began to fail. He died Jan. 8.

"The thing that gets me is the people who still don't believe it's serious or even real, but when they get sick, they run to the hospital," Robert Boam said. "You're taking away from heart attack patients and stroke patients."

The pandemic, he said, "should've been taken seriously from the very beginning, and it wasn't. It was denied. It was downplayed. And it all goes back to one person, as far as I'm concerned."

Asked who that was, Boam would say only: "I'll give you three guesses. The first two don't count."

Stress, and its burden

While almost three years of chaotic public health crises have left Americans of all races uncertain about the future, they have also revealed the enduring nature of racial and class politics — and the cost they exact, including for White Americans.

Those triggers are layered upon each other, stoking stress, said Derek M. Griffith, who co-leads the Racial Justice Institute and directs the Center for Men's Health Equity at Georgetown University.

"Whether it's 'I can't pay my rent and mortgage as easily as I used to,' or 'I want to show I'm not worried about covid,' your body doesn't care where the stress is coming from. It's just experiencing stress," he said. "Then add to that how people are coping with the stress."

When it comes to racism, most people think of something that occurs between individuals. But it's as much about who has access to power, wealth and rights as it is about insults, suspicion and disrespect. Prejudice and discrimination, even if unconscious, can be deadly — and not just for the intended targets.

A growing body of research, outlined in the book “Caste,” by Isabel Wilkerson, shows that even the most anodyne of social exchanges with people of different races, such as glancing at faded yearbook photos, can raise White people's blood pressure and cortisol levels.

Stress is a hard-wired physiological response, triggered at the first sign of danger. The brain sounds an alarm, setting off a torrent of neurological and hormonal signals. Persistent surges of cortisol and other stress hormones can wear down the body, increasing the risk of stroke, diabetes, heart attack or premature death by damaging blood vessels and arteries. Overexposure to stress can weaken the immune response and can make it harder to develop antibodies after being vaccinated against infectious diseases.

Sometimes, the harm is not just biological but also behavioral.

Researchers at the University of Georgia found that White people who assumed the pandemic had a disparate effect on communities of color — or were told that it did — had less fear of being infected with the coronavirus, were less likely to express empathy toward vulnerable populations and were less supportive of safety measures, according to an article in *Social Science & Medicine*.

Perhaps, the report concludes, explaining covid's unequal burden as part of an enduring legacy of inequality “signaled these disparities were not just transitory epidemiological trends, which could potentially shift and disproportionately impact White people in the future.”

Translation: Racial health disparities are part of the status quo.

And because of that, government efforts to bring a public health threat to heel are seen by some White Americans as infringing on their rights, researchers said.

“This is reflective of politics that go back to the 19th-century anxieties about federal overreach,” said Ayah Nuriddin, a postdoctoral fellow at Princeton University who studies the history of medicine.

Us vs. them

Questions about the government's role in ensuring the public's health and well-being hang heavy with historical inflections in states such as Tennessee, once home to the president who argued that Reconstruction-era legislation to help and protect newly freed enslaved people violated states' rights.

And so in many ways, the roots of the consternation over recent pandemic-control measures began sprouting a century and a half earlier.

But that hasn't stopped people such as Civil Miller-Watkins from wondering why those roots are choking so many now.

The former Fayette County school board member, who possesses an abiding belief in the power of the common good, said she finds the mind-set “I know what's good for me, and if it's harmful for you, you're going to have to deal with it” worrisome amid a pandemic.

“Living in a rural county is not for the faint of heart, especially as a Black person,” the 56-year-old said. Still, she can't help but wonder, “if I'm the same neighbor you give sugar to, and you know I have an 84-year-old in my house and a little-bitty baby at home, why wouldn't you wear a mask around me?”

It's a question that dogged her over Christmas when two of her grandchildren were infected with the coronavirus days before they were scheduled to be vaccinated.

“We put it on Republicans and politics,” she said, “but I think we should dig deeper.”

That's what Jonathan M. Metzl, director of Vanderbilt University's Department of Medicine, Health, and Society, did for six years while researching his book "[Dying of Whiteness: How the Politics of Racial Resentment is Killing America's Heartland.](#)"

Published in 2019, it is a book about the politicization of public health and mistrust of medical institutions. It is a story about how communal values take a back seat to individuality. It's an exploration of disinformation and how the fear of improving the lives of some means worsening the lives of others.

"I didn't know it at the time, but I was writing a prehistory of the pandemic," Metzl said in an interview. "You're seeing a kind of dying-of-Whiteness phenomenon in the covid data that's very similar to what I saw in my data."

Metzl and Griffith, a Vanderbilt professor at the time, conducted focus groups on the Affordable Care Act throughout middle Tennessee including White and Black men who were 20 to 60 years old. Some were small-business owners and security guards. Others were factory workers and retirees.

The divergent medical experiences of Black and White patients permeated Metzl's focus groups, particularly when the conversation veered toward the politics of health and government's role in promoting well-being.

"Black men described precisely the same medical and economic stressors as did White men and detailed the same struggles to stay healthy," Metzl wrote. "But Black men consistently differed from White men in how they conceived of government intervention and group identity. Whereas White men jumped unthinkingly to assumptions about 'them,' Black men frequently answered questions about health and health systems through the language of 'us.' "

Tennessee has yet to expand Medicaid under the ACA, a decision fueling rural hospital closures at a rate that eclipses nearly every other state because there isn't enough money to keep the doors open. Not only would expanding Medicaid have saved hospitals, Metzl wrote, it would have saved thousands of lives — White and Black.

Metzl said watching the pandemic unfold felt like a flashback to past battles over federal health-care reform. Messaging that leaned into quantitative data about masks and vaccines sounded eerily similar to the mistakes made, "at least for this part of the country," with the ACA, he said.

"The minute public health infrastructure started to talk about the statistical public health benefits of the mask" and not how everyone needed to be on the same page to stay safe, Metzl said, "I just knew that it was going to open a door for the same kind of anti-ACA stuff, which is 'the government's telling you what to do.' "

As Metzl conducted research for his book in 2016, a 41-year-old uninsured Tennessean named Trevor who was jaundiced and in liver failure told him "I would rather die" than sign up for the ACA. When asked why, Trevor, who was identified by first name only, said: "We don't need any more government in our lives. And in any case, no way I want my tax dollars paying for Mexicans or welfare queens."

Now during the pandemic, there are people like 39-year-old Chad Carswell of North Carolina whose kidneys functioned recently at just 3 percent. He was denied a new kidney in January after refusing to take a coronavirus vaccine as required for the transplant at the time, saying: "I was born free. I'll die free."

Much like protests to "repeal and replace" the ACA, Metzl said rejecting public health measures is about dogma more so than a mistrust of the science of vaccines or masks.

"We've oversimplified this with morality tales about the vaccine is good, and anti-vaxxers are bad, and they're automatically racist," Metzl said. "Being anti-vaccine or anti-mask is part of an ideology. When people get more desperate, they get more ideological."

A funeral, a cause

Skill Wilson's funeral in January was a public testimony to the complexity of people. The room was draped in the unmistakable symbols of patriotism, a steely declaration that this was someone who believed in service and sacrifice for country and community. Firefighters sat in row upon row, their dress uniforms — crisp white shirts and formal blue blazers — marking the solemn occasion. Maskless faces abounded.

His urn, embossed with the firefighters' "thin red line" flag — a black-and-white U.S. flag with a single red stripe across it — sat between two firemen's helmets. It is a flag that some have come to see as a political statement, while others view it as a way to honor fallen firefighters. Behind them, a burial flag folded into a crisp triangle.

A succession of eulogies told the story of a man who could make you drive past your highway exit in a fit of rage, who harassed the fire chief until every station in the county had a flagpole that displayed the Stars and Stripes, who loved sneaking up behind his children and yelling, "Boo!"

Husband. Father. Friend.

Sarcastic. Goofy. Joker.

"Skill was one of the constants in my life. For people who didn't really know our friendship, they'd think we hated each other," said Debbie Patterson, a division chief with Emergency Medical Services at the Memphis Fire Department. "We were constantly going to battle and name-calling. Some of them are dork, idiot, slacker. But our true term of endearment for each other, for years, has been 'b----es.' "

He would call at 6 a.m., even when she wasn't on shift, to "wake me up and tell me I was a slacker for being on vacation," she said, laughing.

During those phone calls, they figured out the day's menu for lunch, bragged about their children and personal lives, and solved the fire department's problems "as firefighters do."

"Of course, we rarely saw eye to eye on anything," she said. "The best part about Skill was he could laugh at himself for being a dumb ass, too."

It was a scene of mourning and hope, of bravado and brokenness. There was as much laughter as sorrow, wounds healed by scripture and classic '70s rock. It was a paragon of Southern, White masculinity.

Last to the lectern was Hollie's uncle, who looked out at the sea of uniforms, at the men and women in government service, and assured them that the uncomfortable truths he said he was about to share were not directed at anybody in the room.

Skill, he said, was a warrior who put his faith in the system that "betrayed him and left him laying on this battlefield" during a "war he was willing to fight."

"How many more good men and women — fathers, brothers, mothers and sisters — will be sacrificed on the altar of money before we all stand up and say this is enough?" he continued, adding that "Skill and I were on the same page. We had the same worldview."

He never specified the war, though he said it was one we're all fighting "no matter what lines they try to draw between us." Faith, he said, lies with God and each other, "not in those who are solely motivated by profit."

But it wasn't about what he said. It was about what he left unsaid: the far-right extremist views that go beyond the bounds of traditional conservative politics and ideals of patriotism.

	<p>Online, he and the family have shared social media posts and, until recently, sold customized insulated plastic cups bearing the insignia of Three Percenters, a decentralized militant movement named after the myth that just 3 percent of the population fought the British in the American Revolution. It's founded on the idea that armed "patriots" should protect Americans from the tyranny of big government, including gun laws, pandemic shutdowns and racial justice protests.</p> <p>Later, outside in the parking lot while smoking a cigarette, Hollie's uncle clarified that the battle is against covid and shared the popular — yet false — conspiracy that potentially lifesaving covid medications are being withheld by the health-care system. What he wouldn't do was provide his name, saying he didn't want "little black SUVs showing up at my house."</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/19 'Great ShakeOut' quake safety movement
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/emergency-preparedness/great-shakeout-global-earthquake-safety-movement-includes-more-than-18-million-u-s-participants-in-2022/
GIST	<p><i>Great ShakeOut Earthquake Drills</i>, a worldwide earthquake safety movement now in its 15th year, encourages people to practice how to protect themselves during shaking to reduce injuries and even loss of life. 44 million people worldwide are participating in earthquake drills in 2022, including more than 18 million Americans holding drills on International ShakeOut Day this Thursday, October 20 (an increase of more than 2.3 million compared to 2021).</p> <p>ShakeOut participants practice "Drop, Cover, and Hold On" and other recommended earthquake safety actions for a variety of situations – if you're near a sturdy desk or table, in a stadium or theater, along the coast, driving a car, in bed, or if you have a mobility disability. Guidance for each situation provided at EarthquakeCountry.org/step5. Many also practice other aspects of their emergency plans.</p> <p>"ShakeOut is a way to increase community resilience at all levels," said Mark Benthien, Global ShakeOut Coordinator and Outreach Director for the Southern California Earthquake Center at the University of Southern California. "Earthquakes can be sudden and violent, but if we have taken steps to prepare ourselves, those around us, and the structures we live, work, and study in, we can greatly reduce their effects."</p> <p>Many participants follow the Earthquake Country Alliance's Seven Steps to Earthquake Safety, which starts with Step 1: Secure Your Space, to help mitigate against earthquake injuries and damages.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/19 St Louis police resignations 'critical mass'
SOURCE	https://news.yahoo.com/st-louis-police-department-resignations-193059703.html
GIST	<p>Resignations have continued piling up at the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department this year, setting off concerns from top law enforcement leaders.</p> <p>"We're reaching critical mass," St. Louis Police Officers Association President Jay Schroeder said this month of staffing issues on the city's force.</p> <p>About 819 officers have left the department since 2017, according to the St. Louis Police Pension Board. The department lost an average of 119 officers each year between 2017 and 2019. In 2020, 129 officers left the force, with an additional 174 leaving in 2021, according to the pension data.</p> <p>St. Louis, which often ranks as one of the least safe cities in the country, joins a growing list of police departments across the country that are bleeding officers in recent years, most notably after calls to defund the police echoed across the nation in 2020.</p> <p>Data provided to Fox News Digital by the St. Louis Police Department shows that, as of Tuesday, the force has 1,035 commissioned employees.</p>

Police department data shows the number of authorized employees has fallen each year since 2020. There were a total of 1,205 commissioned employees at the start of 2020, 1,198 in January 2021, and 1,128 in January of this year.

Interim Police Chief Michael Sack sent an email to staff this month detailing the department has 811 police officers and detectives as of Oct. 3, down from the 905 police officers and detectives the force had at the beginning of October 2021.

"This puts a burden on us to perform our duties with fewer officers," he wrote, KSDK reported earlier this month. "We must pay attention to staffing in the line platoons and on squads. No squad should have fewer than five officers with the optimum number being seven officers. I wish I could give you more, but this is the reality."

"I am working hard to find ways to put more officers on the line platoons. These officers and sergeants provide a great service to our community and they need the support of all of us to help them do their jobs effectively and safely," the email later stated.

At police headquarters, a pile of discarded uniforms known as "Mount Exodus" has also grown, KSDK reported. Outgoing cops have been putting their old uniforms on a pile that has grown higher than seven feet tall and 10 feet wide, and even blocks some surrounding doorways, the outlet reported.

There have been about 71 new hires in 2022, according to the outlet.

Despite concerns from law enforcement leadership in the area, Mayor Tishaura Jones said staffing levels at the department are sufficient, according to KSDK. She cited a 2020 study showing the city has more officers per capita compared to similar sized-cities, the outlet reported.

"We have enough officers, we need to do a better job of retaining and recruiting them," St. Louis Public Safety Director Dan Isom added.

Jones, who was sworn in as mayor last year, campaigned on a safety policy of "putting the public back in public safety." Her campaign website states that "defunding the police does not mean abolishing the police," instead it means "restructuring the department and reallocating the budget to programs and resources that actually prevent crime."

Fox News Digital reached out to the mayor's office for comment on the staffing levels but did not immediately receive a reply.

St. Louis is far from alone in reporting staffing shortages and an increase in resignations — cities across the country have reported more of the same.

The [Chicago Police Department](#) reported the lowest number of employees in recent history at the end of March. The Seattle Police Department reached a 30-year staffing low this year. The vice president of the Philadelphia FOP Lodge sounded the alarm in August that the department is set to lose 800 officers in the next four years.

"We see law enforcement officers leave our profession at a rate we've never seen before," National Fraternal Order of Police President Patrick Yoes said at the Faith & Blue conference in Washington, D.C., in August. "Our profession is dependent on the best and brightest stepping up and taking this job. And because of the actions, and because of the turmoil that has happened in the last two years, we have a crisis right now in manpower."

Some analysts have [attributed the staffing shortages](#) to recent anti-police rhetoric and the "defund the police" movement that swept the nation in 2020 following the killing of George Floyd.

	"Unfortunately, we find ourselves in a very difficult time in American history in the last two years. America's law enforcement has been demonized by many. It has created a rift within this country and eroded the very trust of the institution and the profession of law enforcement," Yoes added during his remarks. "And we're paying for it. We're paying for it in our communities with higher crime. And we're also paying for it in law enforcement officers."
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/20 Beijing steps up Covid preventive measures
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/20/beijing-steps-up-covid-measures-as-cases-quadruple-during-key-ccp-congress-meeting
GIST	<p>China's capital, Beijing, has dialled up measures to stop Covid, strengthening public checks and locking down some residential compounds after a quadrupling of its cases in recent weeks, just as a key Communist party congress entered full swing.</p> <p>The city of 21 million people on Thursday reported 18 new locally transmitted cases for the previous day, bringing the tally for the past 10 days to 197. That is four times more than the 49 infections detected in the previous 10-day period.</p> <p>While the number of cases is very small compared with other countries, China's zero-Covid policy has compelled authorities in the capital to ratchet up preventive measures, particularly with the Communist party holding its once-every-five-years congress, during which President Xi Jinping is expected to secure a precedent-breaking third term as leader.</p> <p>Beijing's health authority called for stronger screening of risky individuals and meticulous checks on people entering crowded places including supermarkets and gyms.</p> <p>Some residential compounds with suspected cases were put under three-day lockdowns that could be extended if new infections emerge.</p> <p>"Ensure that no one is overlooked," Beijing's health authorities said.</p> <p>In recent days, China has pledged to stick to its zero-Covid policy despite growing public frustration with it, and its toll on the economy, quelling speculation that it would relax the hardline stance soon.</p> <p>On Sunday, in his speech to congress, Xi defended the strict zero-Covid policy, which has isolated China from a world slowly trying to return to something like pre-pandemic life. Xi said the hardline approach, "put people and their lives above all else".</p> <p>The policy is facing growing opposition inside China. Earlier this week, reports that a 16-year-old girl has died in a Covid quarantine centre after pleas from her family for medical help were ignored caused anger, while a bus crash last month that killed 27 people who were being taken to a quarantine centre became a lightning rod for social media criticism of the policy.</p> <p>Shanghai, like many other Chinese cities battling sporadic Covid outbreaks, revealed this week that it was planning to build a 3,250-bed quarantine facility on a small island close to the city centre.</p> <p>From April to May, the city of 25 million people endured a protracted lockdown after detecting hundreds of thousands of cases.</p> <p>Other major cities including Beijing and Guangzhou have similar quarantine centres with thousands of beds. They also conduct regular public testing campaigns.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/20 Day 239 of the Russia invasion
----------	---

SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/20/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-239-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moscow-backed self-appointed officials in Ukraine's southern Kherson region have begun moving civilians into Russian territory, citing fears of a Ukrainian counteroffensive. The Russian-installed head of the key southern city Vladimir Saldo spoke of plans to move up to 60,000 people across the Dnipro River. Images of people using boats to flee the city were broadcast by Russian state TV. • Ukrainian officials described Russia's announcements as "a propaganda show" and told people not to comply with the evacuation request. A number have reported receiving mass text messages warning the city would be shelled and informing them that buses would be leaving from the port from 7am on Thursday. Andriy Yermak, chief of staff to the Ukrainian president, described Russian announcements as "a propaganda show" as Kyiv said the population transfers amounted to "deportations". • Russia's recent admission that a "difficult situation has emerged" in the Kherson region is highly unusual and likely indicates that authorities are considering a major withdrawal of their forces from the area west of the Dnipro river, British intelligence has said. • Ukraine will begin restricting electricity supplies across the country starting from 7am today in response to Russia's strikes against its energy infrastructure. Ukrainians will now need to prepare for "rolling blackouts" and people will have to conserve energy, the deputy head of the president's office, Kyrylo Tymoshenko, warned. • A Russian air strike that hit a major thermal power station in the city of Burshtyn in western Ukraine on Wednesday has caused "quite serious" damage, the region's governor said on Thursday. • German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on Thursday that Russian President Vladimir Putin was using energy and hunger as weapons but has failed to break the west's unity and will not achieve his war aims through scorched earth tactics. "We will not let Moscow's latest escalation go unanswered. Scorched earth tactics will not help Russia win the war. They will only strengthen the unity and resolve of Ukraine and its partners," Scholz told the German parliament. • Nato allies will act if Sweden or Finland come under pressure from Russia or another adversary before they become full members of the alliance, Nato secretary general Jens Stoltenberg said on Thursday. • On Wednesday Vladimir Putin declared martial law in the four provinces of Ukraine where Russia controls territory. The law gives far-reaching emergency powers to the Russian-installed heads of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson provinces, which Russia recently proclaimed as annexed after sham referendums. Ukraine's presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak described the announcement as the "pseudo-legalisation of looting of Ukrainians' property". • In his overnight address, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy urged residents not to comply with a military call-up in occupied areas. • Putin also ordered an "economic mobilisation" in six provinces that border Ukraine, plus Crimea and Sevastopol, which Russia illegally annexed in 2014. In televised remarks he said he was granting additional authority to the regional leaders of all Russian provinces to maintain public order and increase production in support of Moscow's war. The law also limits the freedom to move in and out of the eight provinces. • Russia's strikes on critical energy infrastructure are "acts of pure terror" that amount to war crimes, the head of the European Commission has said. Ursula von der Leyen's remarks to the European parliament on Wednesday came after hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians were left without power or water as a result of Russian strikes. • Zelenskiy spoke of "significant results" in downing Iranian drones, claiming 233 Shahed UAVs and dozens of missiles were shot down during the month. Several Russian missiles were shot down over Kyiv on Wednesday afternoon, its mayor, Vitalii Klitschko, said. Greek diplomats have confirmed that the country's foreign minister, Nikos Dendias, who is visiting Ukraine, was forced to seek refuge in a bomb shelter in Kyiv. • The cost to Ukraine of downing "kamikaze" drones vastly exceeds the sums paid by Russia in sourcing and launching the cheap Iranian-made technology, analysis suggests. The total cost to Russia of the failed drone attacks unleashed on Ukraine in recent weeks is estimated

	<p><u>by military analysts to be between \$11.66m (£10.36m) and \$17.9m (£15.9m).</u> The estimated cost to Ukraine to bring down the drones stands at more than \$28.14m (£25m).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EU plans to impose sanctions on <u>three senior Iranian military commanders</u> and the company that develops drones believed to have been used in Russia's attacks on Ukraine. The draft sanctions list, seen by the Guardian, is expected to be agreed within days, indicating EU ministers do not believe Iran's denials that it has supplied Russia with the low-flying lethal weapons. • Russia will reassess its cooperation with UN secretary-general António Guterres and his staff if Guterres sends experts to Ukraine to inspect downed drones that Ukraine and the west assert were made in Iran, Russia's deputy UN ambassador Dmitry Polyanskiy told reporters on Wednesday. • Putin will face "severe consequences" if he uses nuclear weapons in the war in Ukraine, Downing Street has said. Britain's defence secretary, <u>Ben Wallace, has been in Washington</u> for talks with his US counterpart amid reports the Russian leader could detonate a nuclear warhead over the Black Sea. • The European parliament awarded the people of Ukraine its <u>annual Sakharov prize for freedom of thought</u> to honour their fight against Russia's invasion. "They are standing up for what they believe in. Fighting for our values. Protecting democracy, freedom and rule of law. Risking their lives for us," the European parliament president, Roberta Metsola, said.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/19 Finland to build Russia border fence?
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/19/finland-main-parties-back-plans-build-russia-border-fence
GIST	<p>Finland's main political parties have backed building a fence along parts of the country's border with Russia, with work on a short pilot section expected to start as soon as funds have been allocated, Finnish media have reported.</p> <p>Neighbouring Norway, which also shares a border with Russia in the far north, on Wednesday said it had arrested a seventh Russian national suspected of illegally flying drones or taking photographs in restricted areas in recent days.</p> <p>Norway's prime minister, Jonas Gahr Støre, said it was "obviously unacceptable for foreign intelligence to fly drones" over the country after police announced that the son of a close confidant of Vladimir Putin had been detained on Monday.</p> <p>The Finnish broadcaster YLE said a meeting on Tuesday evening between the prime minister, Sanna Marin, and representatives of all main parties had confirmed cross-party support for the plans, proposed last month by the Finnish border guard.</p> <p>Helsinki is increasingly concerned about large-scale illegal crossings of the 830-mile (1,340km) eastern border it shares with Russia – the longest of any EU member – as thousands of Russians flee Moscow's partial mobilisation in response to its faltering war in Ukraine.</p> <p>It is also concerned about the prospect of Moscow deploying orchestrated mass migration as a form of hybrid warfare, as Belarus was accused of doing last year by Poland and the Baltic states of Latvia and Lithuania.</p> <p>"We were in agreement about the need," Marin said after the meeting. "Now the government will bring concrete proposals to parliament." Funding for the pilot section would be voted on by the start of next month, she said.</p> <p>"It is a question of securing proper surveillance of Finland's border," Marin said. "We want to ensure our border guard has sufficient support to carry out appropriate and effective border control, and we need to be prepared for any disruptive situations."</p>

Finland's border guard last month suggested building a fence several metres high, topped with razor wire and equipped with surveillance cameras and sensors along 160 miles of the border – roughly 20% of its total.

The fence would protect areas identified as posing a potential risk of large-scale migration from Russia, mainly in south-east Finland, where most traffic crosses the border, but also around border stations in the north of the country.

The project would take up to four years to complete and could cost several hundred million euros, according to border guard estimates. Final approval for the main phase could be delayed until April, when Finland is due to hold parliamentary elections.

The suspect detained in Norway was identified as Andrei Yakunin, the son of the former Russian railways chief Vladimir Yakunin, who is considered close to Putin. Police said he had been flying a drone in the strategically sensitive Svalbard region.

Earlier this week, Norway, now western Europe's largest gas supplier and on high alert after last month's suspected sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines, said it had arrested four Russian citizens seen illegally taking pictures of facilities last week.

Police did not identify the four, who were carrying photographic equipment and other image-making material, but said they had come to Norway from Finland and claimed to be tourists.

Two other Russians were also arrested in Norway last week, both with drones. One had taken photos of military helicopters and airports, while the other, who held two Russian passports, had a partially encrypted 4 terabyte stash of photos and videos.

Meanwhile, Finland's foreign minister, Pekka Haavisto, warned that Turkish delays to the ratification of Helsinki's application to join Nato were endangering the security of entire Nordic region. He said his country would resist any effort by the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, to separate Finland's Nato application from that of Sweden.

Turkey and Hungary are the only two remaining Nato states yet to ratify the joint Nato application by Finland and Sweden, with Turkey demanding both countries first extradite from their territory to Turkey what Ankara perceives to be Kurdish terrorists.

Referring to the recent attack on the Nord Stream gas pipelines, Haavisto said: "We are living in turbulent times security wise and the sooner we are also covered by Nato article 5 and can contribute to Nato's defence, the better in the circumstances. Any delay in the strengthening of the security in the Baltic Sea is of concern.

"The explosion of the Nord Stream pipeline showed the conflict is getting closer to us. When you delay you have to take into account that this has a side-effect on the security situation in the applicant countries and the entire region."

In an attempt to speed up the ratification process before the Nato summit in June, Finland and Sweden signed a memorandum of understanding with Turkey on how issues such as extradition to terrorism, and terrorism charges, would be handled in both countries. Turkey accuses Sweden especially of harbouring PKK sympathisers.

Many observers believe Erdoğan is bargaining with Finland partly to look tough domestically ahead of next year's elections.

Asked about the fence proposal, Haavisto said the government was being advised by its border experts that some parts of the border were vulnerable to an influx of asylum seekers, and said a fence might be electronic as well as physical.

	<p>He said so far 40,000 Russians had entered Finland, some of whom have returned or moved on, adding that it was to be determined by the courts whether asylum could be granted simply on the basis that the applicant did not wish to fight for Russia in Ukraine.</p> <p>“There might be grounds for seeking asylum on the basis that the conscript was not willing to commit human rights abuses in the Russian army,” he said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/20 Ukraine closing in on Russia war criminals
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/20/ukraine-true-detectives-investigators-closing-in-on-russian-war-crimes
GIST	<p>On 8 March, two weeks into the war in Ukraine, Yanina Chmunevich stood in her grassy garden in Bobryk, 35 miles north-east of Kyiv, smoking a cigarette. As it burned to the filter, she counted 87 Russian heavy armoured vehicles going by, including earth-moving equipment, trucks, armoured personnel carriers and cars with long-barrelled guns attached. The next day, she watched the Russians bring in rocket launchers.</p> <p>Three months later, Chmunevich, 39, who had worked at a petrol station before the war, was steadily recounting the details of the occupation of Bobryk as she sat on a sun porch in a plaid shirt and pink socks. A Ukrainian human rights investigator, Maryna Slobodianiuk, listened intently as she spoke.</p> <p>Slobodianiuk, 40, is a slight woman with a pouf of rust-coloured hair and a voice so quiet that you have to lean in close to hear her properly. But her mild manner is deceptive: as the head of investigations at Ukrainian nonprofit Truth Hounds, researching war crimes and crimes against humanity, she has been to the frontlines in Donetsk, Mykolaiv and Kharkiv, enduring constant bombardment, to record the stories of traumatised survivors.</p> <p>Chmunevich described a visit from Russian soldiers in March. The men – who Chmunevich identified by their accents as Chechens or Armenians – lined her and four of her relatives up along a wall, confiscated their phones and asked for water. The family had already deleted their social media accounts in case there was anything pro-Ukrainian the Russians could find.</p> <p>Throughout her recounting, Chmunevich slouched in a wooden chair and spoke in flat tones, her recitation almost mechanical. Like many Ukrainians I met during my three weeks in the country, after repeated questioning by journalists and investigators, she described terrifying events in a way that made them sound as bland as a discussion of the weather.</p> <p>Her husband asked the Russians why they had come to Ukraine.</p> <p>“To kill Zelenskiy and the Nazis,” one of them replied.</p> <p>The Russians were in Bobryk for three weeks. While they were there, a group of Russian soldiers had taken over a neighbour’s property. Chmunevich had been able to watch them through narrow gaps in her boarded-up windows. She described hearing explosions from the direction of a nearby lake. She had heard from neighbours that the town’s mayor and a shop owner had been kidnapped, led away with plastic bags over their heads. Both men had endured beatings. The shop owner was later shot in the arm. He was told his crime was to have had a security camera at his store. It did not seem to matter that the camera wasn’t working.</p> <p>Since the start of the invasion in February, three Truth Hounds investigators have been crisscrossing the country, recording first-hand accounts and documenting evidence of atrocities in line with the standards of the international criminal court (ICC) in The Hague, with which they remain in constant touch. They began their work in 2014 when the Russians invaded Crimea, but the very fact that Slobodianiuk was able to gather information in areas so recently occupied, and in such detail, is a unique aspect of this war. The</p>

international media, too, has had unprecedented access. As I observed the interview on Chmunevich's porch, on the outer ring of watchers was a documentary team from a Turkish news channel.

"This is the most-covered war probably in history – by journalists, but also by these missions of investigators coming from every country in Europe and the ICC," said Tetiana Pechonchyk, the head of the board of Zmina, a Kyiv-based media and human rights advocacy organisation. Zmina is part of a consortium of more than a dozen Ukrainian NGOs called the [5am Coalition](#). The Russians invaded at 5am on 24 February, and Ukrainians I met referred to it constantly.

Pechonchyk, an authority on war crimes, wore a red suit and matching lipstick when we met at a fish restaurant in Kyiv in July. She acknowledged this war has received "unprecedented attention", and yet, "given the scale of atrocities", she said, "it's not enough. The war is ongoing, and every day the prosecutor's office registers 100 or 200 more cases, and that doesn't even include information from occupied areas." As of 22 September, the prosecutor's office had 34,000 cases filed, every one of which must be investigated, according to Ukrainian law. However, matching and corroborating information from even meticulous investigations is a process that will take years.

There may never have been a war so thoroughly scrutinised as it unfolds. Investigators move in as soon as the Russians leave, within 24 to 48 hours. The country has a more-or-less functioning judiciary, unlike, for instance, Rwanda during the 1994 genocide, where any semblance of a previously existing court system was obliterated during the three months of violence. The question remains: will all this evidence-gathering in Ukraine actually lead to convictions in a tolerable time frame, and will any of it be enough to implicate the people at the top of the command structure?

For now, Truth Hounds, along with dozens of other groups, are collecting evidence of soldiers' actions on the ground. In Bobryk, Chmunevich told Slobodianiuk that the soldiers had shot and killed at least two villagers who were fleeing in their cars, beat and killed another who was held in a basement and interrogated her 50-year-old friend, knocking her front teeth out with a rifle butt. Eleven days after the Russians' first visit, more soldiers returned to Chmunevich's house, again lining the family up along a wall and checking their passports. They taunted and threatened the civilians, Chmunevich said, and appeared to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. "They spoke slowly," she said. "Their eyes looked strange, and their movements were slow." She went on to describe them as "kids with guns", no more than 25 years old, cockily clicking the catches of their guns on and off as they taunted the residents.

"Can you tell me what they said?" Slobodianiuk asked.

"They said if they went into the house and found even one phone, they would choose who to shoot," Chmunevich recalled. As the soldiers were leaving, one of them had threatened her husband: "One of them said: 'Why are we leaving and not shooting anyone? Let's at least shoot him or the dog.'"

After an hour of questioning, Slobodianiuk thanked Chmunevich for her testimony and asked her to sign a form giving consent to share her statement with partner organisations, international courts, investigating bodies in Ukraine, the media and archival institutions.

We left through a gate in the wall that surrounds the property. Slobodianiuk told me what she found useful in the woman's account. As well as the numbers of dead, detained and tortured in Bobryk, she was interested in detailed descriptions of the soldiers: the uniforms, the insignias, how they looked, their accents. "This helps us to identify at least the military unit they belong to," she said. She could then follow up to ascertain which particular units were operating in the areas where crimes had been reported, and even return to villages with photos of alleged perpetrators for identification.

Slobodianiuk folded herself into my car. She explained that while there will ultimately need to be a broader picture assembled of Russian aggression, for her and her team, this is not their goal. Their realm is the grinding fieldwork, the knocking on doors, the questioning and reinterviewing of witnesses and survivors, and picking through unexploded ordnance for evidence. "The main idea is to find these criminals, the people who did these awful things," she said.

In Kyiv, I met Yuriy Byelousov, 45, the head of war crimes in the office of the Ukrainian prosecutor general. Byelousov, who was dressed in all black, put his feet up on the table, exuding confidence bordering on swagger, and laid out the enormity of the task ahead. When we spoke, something like 18,000 cases had already been filed with his office, and Byelousov looked at his watch and joked that there had probably been another 100 filed since we'd been sitting there. There are only 8,000 prosecutors in the country, he said, most of whom have no specialised training in war crimes.

Ukrainian investigators are using drone footage as well as social media to build a more complete picture of Russia's war crimes. Byelousov has been getting technical support from the US, France and the UK, among other countries: "The best possible world expertise is here right now," he said. But the most daunting task is simply trying to impose order on the chaos: organising the deluge of intelligence being given to the office, dividing up responsibilities and avoiding duplication. When we met, just a month after he'd started the job, Byelousov told me he'd largely been focused on updating the office's technology. He had implemented a scanning system for evidence that feeds into a central database. Drones and 3D scanners are being used to make models of the destruction of buildings, neighbourhoods and towns.

One critical component of the prosecutor general's work involves liaising with the international experts advising on and auditing its cases, such as a joint UK-US-EU [atrocities crimes advisory group](#). They can see what's been gathered and judge its usefulness based on their knowledge of international standards. "They would advise us, 'OK guys, you forgot this and this, correct this and that,'" Byelousov said.

Byelousov also spoke of close cooperation between his office and six nearby countries: Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovakia, Poland and the Czech Republic. Investigators from these countries, Byelousov said, are willing to go to the eastern front: "These guys are pretty brave, you know, if they're ready to go into another country and do this work."

Efforts in Ukraine are bolstered by a wider global network of investigators decoding and corroborating satellite imagery and audio intercepts in order to collate evidence for future prosecutions. The network includes investigative journalism group [Bellingcat](#) and the UK-based human rights research organisation [Centre for Information Resilience](#). "It's going to be the nature of conflicts going forward, where there's going to be this kind of network of accountability," [said Eliot Higgins](#), the founder of Bellingcat, which has previously tracked the use of chemical weapons [in Syria](#) and identified suspects in the 2018 novichok poisonings in Salisbury.

Byelousov was concerned that in some cases, the proliferation of citizen fact-finders and journalists on the ground has made things harder for survivors. He said he hopes that if someone has found evidence of sexualised violence, they would "just give it to us and don't interview victims of rape for several hours. Then comes the journalist, and someone else, so when we come to the victim, [they have been] tortured 1,020 times."

One international war crimes investigator agreed that such repeated questioning not only is traumatic for survivors, but can also affect the usefulness of their testimonies. "You don't want witnesses who've told their stories over and over," they said. "If there are inconsistencies, they can be ruled out or called 'complicated witnesses'. It's unfortunate."

The process of bringing cases to court can be long and drawn-out, as with the prosecution of former Yugoslavian president Slobodan Milošević. The Hague established the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in 1993 during the Bosnian war, but only charged Milošević in 1999. It took until 2001 to apprehend him and transfer him to The Hague for trial. Milošević [died in a jail cell](#) in 2006, while his trial was still under way.

The ICC was set up in 2002 to prosecute the leaders behind the worst atrocities, but the vast majority of cases arising from this conflict will be crimes committed by lower-ranking soldiers, which will be tried within Ukraine. Slobodianiuk thinks the ICC is "very precise but rather slow". And being slow, she said,

“means you are at great risk of losing evidence that is focused on high commanders”. Not only does physical proof, such as rocket fragments, disappear with time, but victims and witnesses change their minds about speaking to investigators. They move, they rebuild, they forget. “We have to pick everything up quickly to create the complete and true picture,” she said.

The most serious cases may be brought via the principle of universal jurisdiction, in which a third country steps in to try crimes that “are of such exceptional gravity that they affect the fundamental interests of the international community as a whole,” says the New York-based [Center for Constitutional Rights](#). (In January, a former Syrian security official, [Anwar Raslan](#), was convicted in a German court for crimes against humanity.) But with so many perpetrators, inevitably, most do not face justice. For many Bosnian women who were raped by soldiers during the war, their ordeal continues, because their rapists walk free. They are liable to meet their attackers on city buses or crossing the street at night. In Rwanda, people live next door to the men who tortured them and killed their relatives.

Even the ICC, since its founding in 2002, has [only convicted four](#) men in total, all high-level commanders: three from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and one from Mali. It’s why so many experts are pinning their hopes on Ukraine – it may be possible to convict more perpetrators in this war than ever before.

A few days before I met Byelousov, Ukraine’s top war crimes prosecutor, I spoke to a nurse in her mid-50s, who I’ll call Svitlana Mazurko. Mazurko, who wore short-sleeved scrubs dotted with what looked like a cross between Giotto’s cherubim and the Powerpuff Girls, had survived the occupation of Bucha, a north-western suburb of Kyiv, in the early days of the war.

On the morning of 24 February, Mazurko recalled, she was at home in Bucha, cooking breakfast and doing laundry. Her husband, an engineer at the nearby Antonov airport in Hostomel, was at work. At 11.05am precisely, she remembers, she went on to the balcony to smoke. She heard low-flying helicopters – they were level with the second or third floor of her building – and watched as two jets swooped in behind them. At her count, she saw 40 helicopters heading toward the airport.

The jets, she said, made a couple of circles, strafing the suburban streets. As she recalled watching people duck and hide, she rubbed her knees with shaking hands. She remembered calling her daughter in Kyiv to tell her she should evacuate. Her husband wasn’t answering his phone. At noon, he finally called.

“I’ve been captured,” he said.

After he got to work, Russian soldiers had dropped to the ground from helicopters, rounded up the airport staff, and told them they were now hostages. For an hour, the captives watched as the soldiers discussed what they should do with their charges. It seemed that these men – mostly young, some drunk, pulled from the far reaches of Russia to fight in Ukraine – didn’t know what to do next.

Mazurko’s husband called again that afternoon. He had managed to negotiate his release, along with about 150 others at the airport. He made it home safely, but the shooting and shelling did not stop. Mazurko and her husband, with a few neighbours, moved down to the basement of their house.

Then, on 28 February, Mazurko said: “We had guests. The Russians came to us.”

Several cars arrived, and an armoured personnel carrier. From then, she said, “time flowed differently”. Her tears finally started to fall while she scrunched a tissue until it became useless. “They started looting in our building and had crowbars they used to open doors. We heard them shouting to one another.”

The area around Bucha is heavily wooded. A lot of local men go hunting and keep guns. The Russians went from house to house stealing rifles, as well as any gold they could find, canned meat, electrical appliances and even fishing rods. At one point in the weeks she spent under Russian occupation, Mazurko watched as a huge, refrigerated truck normally used to transport chicken meat was loaded up with the town’s possessions.

Mazurko and her family and neighbours were still hiding in the basement when she heard the soldiers shouting: “Who’s there? Hands in the air!”

About 30 soldiers put the women up against a wall with their arms up. “They were touching us everywhere with their hands,” Mazurko said. They forced the men to strip to their underwear. They were checking for military tattoos or marks on the men’s shoulders from rifle recoil. Men who have them, I’d been told, are singled out to go to “filtration camps”, from which they’re likely to be sent on to Russia, beaten or killed.

After weeks in her basement, Mazurko was so stressed that some of the blood vessels in her face ruptured. She and her neighbours had buried a man who’d died – apparently of a heart attack – while in the basement.

After we had talked for about an hour, Mazurko left the room and came back carrying a wrinkled plastic shopping bag, the kind with reinforced handles. It looked heavy. She came over to the couch and dumped out a stack of papers, as well as a hardcover book the colour of blue jeans. It had an unbroken seal on it. She said that her husband had found them at the airport after the Russians left. There were pages and pages of Russian documents, including an evacuation map to Belarus with coordinates of stops along the way, code names of officers and, in the blue book, the pencilled-in names, addresses and parents’ names – even the schools they attended – of each man in one of the anti-tank guided missile units that had landed at Antonov airport, which the Russians had hoped to use as a base to take Kyiv.

“Have you shown these to anyone before today?” I asked Mazurko.

She said she had not. Various war crimes investigators I spoke to said that proving the authenticity of such documents is key, so it was important that they did not get passed around from one person to the next, and there was no risk they could have been altered. “You have to take them home and not move them again until you hand them straight to the prosecutor-general’s office,” I told her.

When I showed photos of the documents to Byelousov, he was delighted. “Yeah, Russians, thanks!” he laughed. The documents, he said, had many potential uses. The most urgent thing was to get the physical documents directly to his office. They would also need to interview Mazurko’s husband to find out exactly where he’d found them. I would spend the next two weeks trying to make sure this cache of valuable data got into the right hands.

Among the documents I’d been given was a list of all the medical staff attached to various battalions’ tactical groups, as well as the call signs of each commander in the medical units. These could be compared with radio intercepts as a way to locate where the units were, and when. There was also an order for a huge amount of a heavy, Russian-made opioid anaesthetic that doctors and investigators have told me may be used to help with hangovers.

I showed Maryna Slobodianiuk from Truth Hounds photos of the documents. After a minute of flipping through the images on an iPad, she threw her head back and laughed. It was just insane, she said, to find such things. The hardcover personnel book would be particularly helpful, she said, because it lists the contract terms for each soldier, some of which expired before the invasion. This could indicate forced conscription, or exclude men from actually being in Ukraine with that unit during this war.

When I spoke to Slobodianiuk about a month later, she told me she had uploaded all the information I gave her to the Truth Hounds database, helping the group make as complete a profile of each listed Russian soldier as possible. “And if we can,” she said, “we’ll be able to link a specific crime to a perpetrator, and we will already have them in this database.”

When Pierre Vaux, an investigator at the Centre for Information Resilience (CIR), saw the hardcover “attendance” book I’d been shown, he couldn’t contain himself: “God, this is actual gold!” he said. The book, he believes, is a standard record book. He was able to use one of the documents to verify which

troops were in what type of vehicle, and where, by looking at time-stamped satellite images (when cloud cover permitted) and [painted-on vehicle numbers](#).

Even the smallest and strangest things the Russians left behind in their hasty withdrawals may be useful. A journalist for the Associated Press (AP) was shown a soldier's letter home, found by police in Overa, north-west of Kyiv. It had been written on the back of a scrap of paper – a blank sheet to record orders for the crew of BTR-MDM (an amphibious armoured personnel carrier) number 122. The AP reporter showed the paper to Vaux, who then entered the document into his database. Then he used the list of Russian medical staff attached to battalion tactical groups to identify two of the crew members in that vehicle, and the brigade they were part of – the 31st Guards Air Assault Brigade, based in Ulyanovsk – thus putting specific soldiers at a precise place.

He identified the evacuation route map as having been drawn pre-invasion, conjured from “wishful thinking”. It showed intended targets – many never taken – for occupation. The map's starting point, the Vasylykiv airbase, is much further south than the Russians ever reached, about 25 miles south-west of Kyiv. It was further evidence that the Russian army was poorly briefed and ill-prepared for the invasion. “It's really like the back-of-a packet-of-cigarettes kind of map,” Vaux said. “A back-of-an envelope job.”

Documenting individual crimes and bringing the perpetrators to justice is one thing, but the ultimate goal of many war crimes investigators in Ukraine is to build a case against Russia for genocide. [Putin views Ukraine](#) as a Soviet-era creation, denying its long history as a separate region from Russia, and every person from a Ukrainian NGO I spoke to has collected evidence that cultural erasure and the obliteration of Ukrainian identity is Russia's final aim. “Russians have a precise aim of destroying our culture, as part of our identity, as something that distinguishes Ukraine from Russia,” Olha Honchar, co-founder of Ukraine's Museum Crisis Center, [told Bloomberg News](#). Since the war began in February, about 500 cultural heritage sites have been damaged – a scale of such crimes not seen since the second world war, according to [Kateryna Chuieva](#), Ukraine's deputy minister of culture and information policy.

Genocide, first named as such in 1944 by a Polish lawyer, was recognised as a crime by the UN general assembly in 1946. A UN convention [defines genocide](#) as consisting of mental and physical crimes “committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group,” including a deliberate attempt by the enemy to obliterate cultural heritage and reproductive capacity.

Tetiana Pechonchyk from Zmina said she had heard about cases of women being told by Russian soldiers while they were being assaulted: “We will rape you until you won't want to see men any more.” [In Rwanda](#), rape was often accompanied by mutilation – a way to forcibly sterilise the “less than human” enemy. [In Bosnia](#), during the 1992-1995 war, Serbian soldiers held women at “rape camps” – places such as hotels or encampments where women were imprisoned until they became [pregnant](#). A Ukrainian legal expert, [Larisa Denysenko](#), is representing nine women in a number of lawsuits, seven of whom were gang raped by Russian soldiers in Kyiv, Sumy, Donetsk, Kherson and Chernihiv. She told me she believes “this is a military tactic of the occupation army, a method of terror and intimidation of the civilian population”. All nine women had heard Russians saying during their attacks: “*banderivka*” (fascist), “Nazi” and “prostitute”. In several cases, the women were raped in the presence of relatives who were held at gunpoint.

While Pechonchyk said she believes rape is happening on a “massive scale”, and that a number of organisations are collecting evidence, “we cannot assess it by numbers, as it is a hidden crime”. Not only are survivors often unwilling to talk about their attacks, she said many are living in occupied areas barely reachable by investigators. “It's almost not possible to receive any information,” Pechonchyk said. “They might speak about torture, but not necessarily specifying what was done to them.”

In mid-October, the UN [said](#) it had documented more than 100 cases, and declared that rape is a “military strategy” used to dehumanise Ukrainians. “All the indications are there,” said Pramila Patton, the UN special representative on sexual violence. Patton spoke about cases of genital mutilation and Russian soldiers “equipped with Viagra”.

There is a growing body of evidence that Russians are trying to erase the Ukrainians through mass killing, forced Russian citizenship and the relocation of Ukrainians to Russia. Investigators are still discovering graves in [Bucha](#), near Kyiv, and [Izium](#) in the east. They are finding signs of systematic, intentional murder: hands tied behind backs, bullet holes to the back of skulls.

“Russian authorities already announced that the children taken from Ukraine ... don’t know Russian language on a sufficient level,” said Pechonchyk. “That’s why they need to adopt them and ... make them *Russian* Russians.” She said that this is not the first time Russia has tried to “Russify” Ukrainians. During the 2014 Crimean war, all Crimeans [were made](#) Russian citizens. “This was also done by Stalin on a much larger scale in 1944,” Pechonchyk said, “when they accused Crimeans to be [collaborators of Hitler](#) and they deported people to Asia – to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and other countries.”

Byelousov told me his department was handing evidence of genocide to another body, but he would not say which. The ICC, for its part, would not confirm whether it is investigating genocide. In March, Karim Khan, the head of ICC prosecutions, put out a statement saying that the ICC would investigate and intended to prosecute attacks “intentionally directed” against civilians and “civilian targets”, including hospitals.

Ukrainians want justice for what they have endured, and for the loved ones they have lost. But, as Clint Williamson, the head of a joint US/UK/EU legal and investigative effort in partnership with the Ukrainians, told me, prosecutors “are not going to get their hands on people in the near term”. So far, just [three Russian soldiers](#) have been tried and convicted in Ukraine.

By the time I woke up on my last day in Kyiv, two missiles had already hit the city. Fired a little after 6am, they’d [hit](#) a kindergarten playground and a residential building, killing one man. I don’t know whether it was the sound of the strikes that roused me, or the calm lady from an app on my iPhone warning me that missiles had been launched towards my location and telling me to “pay attention”. About an hour later, a second air-raid alert, which blared through my phone as well as in the city streets, had already started up.

As the horns sounded, people remained where they were, in cafes, working, doing whatever they were doing. It’s exhausting to seek cover so many times a day, and the constant adrenaline shifts wreak havoc on the body. But with the hits being so close to my apartment, I threw on my body armour and went to sit in the stairwell. The idea is to get somewhere with two thick walls between you and the outside, and away from all glass. As I sat there, a cleaning woman casually entered my neighbour’s apartment with a stack of sheets and waved. Now I felt foolish.

In the evening, I visited an apartment building that had been hit. One civilian had been killed and six wounded. A few people I spoke to thought the old munitions factory across the road had been the intended target. Emergency workers slapped the soot from their heavy black coats, trimmed in reflective yellow, and checked their phones. Right in the centre of the massive apartment building, the top three storeys of eight were charred and crushed, as if a giant fist had smashed into it from the sky. Nearly every one of the hundreds of windows on the front of the structure were shattered.

Before I left Ukraine, I wanted to visit Babyn Yar, site of one of the worst single massacres of the second world war, where 33,000 Jews were executed. Later, another 70,000 people – including psychiatric patients, Soviet prisoners of war and Roma people – were murdered here. I stood in the gathering dark on the edge of a grassy field. To my left was a TV tower that looked like something out of a Russian constructivist painting, recently damaged by a Russian missile. There was nothing to do but stand and consider the bones beneath the soil – and the painful repetition of history.

There were [29 known survivors](#) of the massacre at Babyn Yar. But a number of trials – some held in Kyiv, others in Nuremberg over the following 25 years – resulted in only about a dozen convictions of Nazis, most of whom had been living full and free lives in the meantime. (As late as 2021, a lawyer was [pursuing](#) a 99-year-old man said to be the last living perpetrator.) The attempt to cover up the mass murder at Babyn Yar means that only about one in 10 of the many thousands of people who died there

have been identified. But much of what we do know was gathered by journalists who visited the site when Kyiv returned to Russian control in 1943. They interviewed three Russian prisoners of war who had survived the massacre, and they toured the site, finding bones and shoes and other remnants of the dead.

Bill Downs, who reported on the massacre for Newsweek, [wrote](#) to his parents in 1944: “Unless it can be brought home as to what the Germans have done in Europe – the cruelty and ruthlessness and bestial killings and emasculations and dismemberment that has gone on – well, I’m afraid that we’ll be too soft on them.”

It would take a few more decades, but memorials to the Jewish dead would be built on these killing fields. Reckoning for what is now happening in Ukraine will probably be slow to come, too, but the ground is already breached, exposing the crimes Russia is committing, every day, on Ukrainian soil. In Izium, investigators have identified [10 torture sites](#), including one at a police station, another at a school and another in a putrid hole in the ground, where Russians had run electric wires into men’s ears and hung them by the wrists. Survivors say they were waterboarded. And as investigators exhume hundreds of bodies from Izium’s sandy soil, they do so beneath some of the same conifer trees that had previously stood witness to mass murder [during the second world war](#).

Unearthing the dead and witnessing evidence of their torture is a brutal and painstaking process. Many crimes will never be accounted for. Too much evidence has been destroyed already. But with so many people devoted to pursuing justice, and so much evidence collected, the probability is growing that there will be a price, of some kind, paid.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/19 Downing drones exceeds Russia costs
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/19/financial-toll-ukraine-downing-drones-vastly-exceeds-russia-costs
GIST	<p>The cost to Ukraine of downing the “kamikaze” drones being fired at its cities vastly exceeds the sums paid by Russia in sourcing and launching the cheap Iranian-made technology, analysis suggests.</p> <p>A total of 161 Shahed-136 drones, one larger Shahed-129 and four even larger unmanned attack vehicles known as Mohajer-6s have been shot down by Ukrainian air defences in the last month.</p> <p>With the price of the Iranian-made Shahed-136s standing at €20,000 to €50,000 for each vehicle, the total cost to Russia of the failed drone attacks unleashed on Ukraine in recent weeks is estimated by military analysts at the NGO Molfar to be between \$11.66m (£10.36m) and \$17.9m (£15.9m).</p> <p>Ukraine has deployed a host of weaponry to bring down the drones, including MiG-29 jets, C-300 cruise missiles, Nasams ground defence systems and small-arms fire.</p> <p>The estimated cost to Ukraine stands at more than \$28.14m (£25m), according to the analysis, which is based on open sources. The data includes drones launched between 13 September and 17 October.</p> <p>It highlights the low financial cost to Russia of the drone attacks, which are continuing to unleash terror in Ukraine, killing civilians and striking at the country’s energy infrastructure.</p> <p>Artem Starosiek, Molfar’s chief executive, said the use of drones should nevertheless be seen as a sign of Moscow’s weakness. “Russia is losing this war. If they are ordering drones from Iran it means they don’t have their own weapons.”</p> <p>The US accused Moscow of war crimes following the latest drone and missile attacks on Kyiv and elsewhere, which struck civilian apartments as well as critical infrastructure. Nearly a third of Ukraine’s power stations have been destroyed since Monday last week and tens of people have been killed.</p>

Iran has denied providing Russia with weaponry for its war in Ukraine. However, US and Ukrainian intelligence has claimed 600 drones were ordered by Russia early in the summer, of which it is estimated between 250 to 300 have been deployed.

Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, claimed last week, however, when speaking via video link at a G7 summit, that an additional 2,400 "Shaheds" had been ordered by the Russian military from Tehran, although he did not specify the type. "These are on the move," said Starosiek.

Ukraine's armed forces have had a high degree of success in shooting down the Shahed-136 drones, rebranded as Geran-2 by Russia, which are low flying and slow.

About 60% had been destroyed in the air, according to an earlier analysis by British intelligence on 6 October. But the Molfar data suggests up to 80% of the 208 Shahed-136s launched up to 17 October were shot down. According to Molfar's data, about 70% of the drones were launched in daylight before noon.

On Wednesday, Ukraine's air force reported that as of that morning 223 Iranian-made Shahed-136 drones had been downed since 13 September, when the first drone was shot down. On Monday, Russia attacked Ukraine with 43 drones, of which 37 were destroyed, a spokesperson added.

Starosiek said the low flight path of the drones made it difficult, for ground defences to pick them up and that "drone catching" technology was required to further improve the rate of destruction.

He said: "We should know about these drones before they're moving over the city because if you're hitting these drones, it could fall down and hit a large amount of people."

The drone attacks continued on Wednesday. Vitaliy Kim, the governor of Mykoliav, in the south-east of the country, said Ukrainian forces had shot down 13 "kamikaze" drones overnight by anti-aircraft defences and soldiers of the national guard.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/19 Severe drought torments British Columbia
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/19/british-columbia-drought-floods-climate-crisis
GIST	<p>Nearly a year ago, flood waters inundated swaths of south-western British Columbia. Mudslides destroyed sections of highways and swollen, turbid rivers washed away houses and bridges.</p> <p>Now, the region has the opposite problem: months of drought have begun to take a toll on what was once dubbed Canada's "wet coast".</p> <p>And as unpredictable weather events become a hallmark of a changing climate, experts warn that the two events are linked – and that a culture of overconsumption and poor resource management threaten to further amplify the effects of the current crisis.</p> <p>The impact of the prolonged dry spell was underlined by recent footage showing some 65,000 dead salmon clogging a dried-up creek. More than 200 forest fires are blazing, and scores of heat records have fallen in recent weeks. The province's energy regulator has already warned the drought will have an impact on its hydroelectric operations.</p> <p>Eight communities have entered a level 5 drought, in which provincial authorities warn that "adverse impacts to socio-economic or ecosystem values" are nearly certain. On Monday, the Sunshine Coast, a community less than 100km north of Vancouver, declared a state of emergency as water supplies dwindled to dangerously low levels.</p> <p>Other regions have seen similarly dismal conditions. In a typical four-month period between July and October, the British Columbia capital, Victoria, typically sees close to 100mm of rain. But since July, only</p>

2mm have fallen on the parched ground. In the Fraser Valley, only 10mm have fallen— far below an average of 220mm.

But experts caution the severity of droughts are not just defined by a lack of precipitation. Instead, they say residents need to understand the extensive and complex systems of hydrology – and the impact that human actions have in magnifying the current crisis.

“The factors that cause a specific drought are randomly occurring over time. We simply cannot blame the current one on a lack of rain during the last several months,” said Younes Alila, an expert in forest hydrology and professor at the University of British Columbia. “To do so would be a big mistake.”

The largest source of water for replenishing the region’s creeks, streams and lakes is not rainfall but the accumulated snowpack in the mountains, Alila said.

The snow gradually accumulates through the season and as it eventually melts, it provides a consistent re-supply of water to groundwater aquifers and reservoirs.

When back-to-back [atmospheric rivers](#) – long, narrow bands of water vapour in the atmosphere that extend from the tropics to higher latitudes – passed over south-western British Columbia in November, they dropped an uncharacteristically large volume of rain at high elevations, wiping out portions of the snowpack.

“Ten months ago, when we lost 30 to 40cm of snow in 48 hours, that likely exacerbated the effects of droughts we’re seeing now,” he said. As a result, critical ground water recharge was far less than needed.

Experts have warned that the duration and severity of atmospheric rivers [can be linked to climate change](#) and are expected to increase in the coming years.

Alila also pointed to a number of other factors, often the result of human action, that have likely worsened the effects of the current drought.

Large scale-clear cutting of the province’s forests is among the worst culprits, dramatically altering the landscape of the province.

Newer forests, planted to replace what was cut down, consume far more groundwater than tracts of old growth. On the coast where the drought is worse, the problem is magnified: young coniferous trees consume water far more aggressively than their scarcity-adapted counterparts in the province’s interior. With less water available, the transpiration process is reduced, meaning trees release less moisture back into the air.

Even the creation of logging roads has a profound impact on groundwater recharge, diverting rainfall away from soil and into ditches that help drain the roads. Those ditches are connected to a network of culverts under the roads that are in turn lined up to existing gullies and channels.

The water is eventually pushed out to the ocean, instead of being absorbed by the ground. That recharge is particularly helpful in late summer and early fall months, when rainfall is the lowest.

“We’ve come to a point of no return in this province, because of the sheer amount of clear-cut logging they’ve been doing over the last 20 years. The damage is already done,” he said. “The least we can do is recognize the complexity of the processes and how land use can exacerbate the effects of changing climate.”

Experts also caution that a culture of overconsumption, aided by a belief by many residents that the country’s water resources are limitless, poses a danger for the future.

	<p>Zafar Adeel, a professor at Simon Fraser University’s school of sustainable energy engineering, says Canadians often have a “misguided” sense that fresh water is a limitless resource in the country.</p> <p>“People tend not to really understand the consequences of continued excessive water usage,” he said, pointing to a number of lush green lawns in his neighbourhood. “Particularly in [coastal] British Columbia, there’s a sense of immunity and this invincibility that we have enough – that we’ll never be out of water.”</p> <p>Adeel also cautions that when the rains eventually come, the harder, clay-like consistency of the parched soil raises the risk of flash floods.</p> <p>“There isn’t much we can really do in the short term when it comes to adaptation ... And I don’t really know what the forecasts are for the next couple of months in terms of the amount of rainfall,” he said. “But if we get another atmospheric-river type event, God forbid we encounter that type of situation. I think it would be a lot more damaging than last year.”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/19 WHO: ‘dire shortage’ of cholera vaccines
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/oct/19/who-forced-to-ration-vaccine-as-cholera-cases-surge-worldwide
GIST	<p>A “dire shortage” of cholera vaccines amid an unprecedented rise in global cases has forced health officials to halve the number of doses given to people in outbreak hotspots, the World Health Organization has said.</p> <p>The “exceptional decision” to reduce the number of doses from two to one would allow for the vaccines to be eked out until the end of the year, and given to more people in more countries, the WHO said today.</p> <p>The organisation conceded the move would inevitably lead to a “reduction and shortening of immunity”, adding: “The one-dose strategy has proven to be effective to respond to outbreaks, even though evidence on the exact duration of protection is limited, and protection appears to be much lower in children.”</p> <p>Mike Ryan, the executive director for the WHO’s health emergencies programme, said the decision marked “a sad day”.</p> <p>“We shouldn’t have to do it,” Ryan said. “And it is purely based on the availability globally of vaccines.”</p> <p>Twenty-nine countries have reported cholera cases this year – including Haiti, Malawi and Syria, which are facing large-scale outbreaks. Health officials believe the true number to be higher given some countries’ reluctance to be associated with the heavily stigmatised “disease of the poor”.</p> <p>The tally shows a clear uptick on the previous five years, when fewer than 20 countries on average reported outbreaks. The WHO has said it is particularly concerned about the fatality rate, which this year was almost three times the rate of the past five years.</p> <p>Cholera is a waterborne disease and is easily treatable if responded to in a timely fashion, but can kill within hours if not.</p> <p>The International Coordinating Group (ICG), the body that manages emergency stocks of vaccines, had taken the decision because of the “extremely limited” supply, the WHO said in a statement, reiterating previous calls for “urgent action” to boost global vaccine production.</p>

	<p>Of the total 36m doses forecast to be produced this year, 24m have already been shipped and 8m more have been earmarked for emergency vaccination campaigns, leaving just 4m doses in the global stockpile.</p> <p>Speaking in Geneva the director general of the WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said the move was “clearly less than ideal”.</p> <p>“Rationing must only be a temporary solution,” Tedros said. “In the long term, we need a plan to scale up vaccine production as part of a holistic strategy to prevent and stop cholera outbreaks.”</p> <p>This scarcity will only be exacerbated by a key manufacturer’s decision, revealed by the Guardian last week, to discontinue production of one of the two oral cholera vaccines used in humanitarian emergencies.</p> <p>“As vaccine manufacturers are producing at their maximum current capacity, there is no short-term solution to increase production,” the WHO said. “The temporary suspension of the two-dose strategy will allow the remaining doses to be redirected for any needs for the rest of the year.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/19 China pushes deeper into citizens’ lives
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/xi-china-surveillance-covid-11666187151?mod=hp_lead_pos5
GIST	<p>SHANGHAI—In many parts of Xi Jinping’s China, state surveillance and Covid-19 controls begin the moment you step out the door in the morning.</p> <p>The day might start with a government-mandated Covid test from workers in white hazmat suits. Without proof of a negative result, public spaces are off limits, including office buildings, grocery stores and parks. Surveillance cameras keep watch over the city streets. In a cab on the way to work, the driver requires you to scan a QR code for a government database tracking people’s movements. Scan again when stopping by Starbucks for coffee and then again at the office.</p> <p>If the database shows you’ve crossed paths with someone infected by the virus, you’ll likely be forced into quarantine. It may be in a hotel room, at a converted convention center, or if lucky, at home with an alarm installed on the front door.</p> <p>The Chinese state has stretched far deeper into citizens’ lives since Mr. Xi took power in 2012. Covid has pushed the controls to entirely new levels. Such measures are increasingly testing the faith of Chinese citizens in a government that is no longer delivering the supercharged economic growth that underpinned popular support for decades.</p> <p>When Mr. Xi took office, he set in motion a campaign to put the Communist Party back at the center of public life. Beijing increased censorship of social media, expanded surveillance and cracked down on private enterprise. He is expected to secure a third term as the country’s leader following the party’s twice-a-decade congress this week, after a steady drive to consolidate power.</p> <p>In a rare public protest last week, two banners appeared on a bridge in Beijing ahead of the congress. Slogans on the banners included “We Want Freedom, Not Lockdowns” and “Depose the Traitorous Dictator Xi Jinping.” Police quickly arrived and the banners were taken down.</p> <p>“I trust them less, definitely,” said Krissy Gu, who runs a fitness and dance studio and has endured two extended lockdowns since the beginning of 2020, including the earliest one in the city of Wuhan in 2020 and one in Shanghai this spring that lasted two months. The government had initially said it would last four days.</p>

Ms. Gu went to graduate school in Boston and stayed in the U.S. for several years, then returned to China in 2017. “I just felt like I could do all the things I wanted to do” in China, she said. She launched her studio in downtown Shanghai and got involved with local theater.

She is considering leaving China again, this time for a Ph.D. in Europe. “This year is my first time to start to think about me as a citizen and the relationship with the government,” she said. “I think it has happened to a lot of people.”

The State Council Information Office, which handles press inquiries for senior leaders, and Shanghai’s government didn’t respond to requests for comment.

The surveillance extends far beyond Covid. Chinese authorities combine data from biometric tools such as facial recognition with ID numbers and behavioral data collected by tech companies to identify actions they consider threatening to social order. In the far northwestern region of Xinjiang, faces, voices and physical movements are tracked in real time using cameras and other surveillance tools powered by artificial intelligence as part of a campaign to forcibly assimilate ethnic Uyghurs and other minority groups.

The increasing intrusions into daily life build on growing frustration over an economic slowdown, brought on in part by Covid lockdowns, that has made it harder to find jobs. Mr. Xi has cracked down on technology and education companies in an effort to rein in private sector risk-taking and assert greater state control over the economy. As of August, the urban youth unemployment rate sat at 18.7%, according to government statistics.

In China’s beleaguered property market, government restrictions on developers’ borrowing have helped spark falling prices. Over the summer, a movement to boycott paying mortgages on stalled real-estate projects spread to numerous cities.

Consumer confidence measured by the National Bureau of Statistics hit a new level of pessimism in April, and has since remained depressed as pandemic controls have endured.

Public opinion will likely start to rebound whenever China eases Covid controls, especially if the economy strengthens as a result. Economists expect output to grow around 3% this year, missing the government’s 5.5% target. Some are reconsidering when China’s economy will surpass the U.S. as the world’s largest, [or if it ever will](#). The government has given little information about how its Covid policy might evolve going forward.

In the case of a 6-year-old boy who recently tested positive for Covid days after landing in Shanghai on a domestic flight, the government first placed 400 of the boy’s close contacts into quarantine. Then officials began tracking down secondary contacts—people who had come into contact with others deemed to be close to the boy.

Authorities descended on an IKEA after determining that a close contact of the boy had also visited the store, then left. Verified video footage showed people attempting to escape as security officers tried to barricade shoppers inside.

The government tested 83,000 people in connection with the boy’s case. No one besides the boy tested positive, according to the city government.

China’s government says its approach to Covid has saved lives, and many Chinese support the controls. Official statistics say about 5,200 people in mainland China have died of Covid, compared with more than 1 million in the U.S. Mr. Xi has labeled his effort against Covid as a “People’s War,” a phrase that harks back to the Mao era’s revolutionary fervor.

The lowest rungs of China's government have been [handed far more authority](#) to control their neighborhoods. Government workers and volunteers monitor Covid-19 risks and report on residents' activities.

Prior to Mr. Xi, the government had gradually retreated from people's lives beginning in the late 1970s, allowing them to take up more private pursuits. Many foreign executives until recently saw China's leadership as pragmatic above all else.

"Now ideology is trumping the economy," the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China said recently when it released its latest position paper on the country.

Tracking public opinion in China is notoriously difficult. The government jails critics and academic freedom has eroded. On social media, posts critical of the government are frequently suppressed or deleted.

Before Covid-19 and even through the early days of the pandemic, some Western scholars found through surveys that Chinese were broadly supportive of the government, and that their satisfaction levels had grown in the previous two decades.

Mr. Xi won support from many Chinese after taking office for a wide-ranging anticorruption campaign and efforts to reduce poverty. These initiatives, and Chinese state media's depiction of a decadent and decaying U.S., fostered greater nationalism.

Much of the recent frustration has been directed at local officials rather than at the central government.

In southwestern Guizhou, one of China's poorest regions, anger crescendoed in recent weeks. A bus transporting residents into forced quarantine crashed in the middle of the night, killing 27 people and injuring 20 others. A local official expressed remorse, but was met with cynicism.

A protest formed online. "We're all on the bus," many users wrote.

A mother of two young children said she was on a different bus that night, forced into quarantine after her 4-year-old tested positive, only to be later cleared of the virus.

"I'm extremely sad and indignant," she later wrote on the Chinese platform Zhihu. "Apart from empathy, I lament even more that our freedom and our lives might merely hinge on another person's careless decision."

When Mr. Xi took power, a growing high-speed rail system whisked travelers around the country. Today, carrying a large suitcase can prompt questions about a person's movements. A business traveler upon arriving home can expect calls from the police about where they've been.

Like many Chinese from the provinces, Yuan Yuyu dreamed of launching a career in Beijing. A college graduate with a computer-programming degree, Ms. Yuan landed a job in the capital and booked a train ticket there in early 2020.

When the pandemic hit, Ms. Yuan said her ticket was suddenly canceled due to travel restrictions. Her job offer dried up.

She stayed in her home city in Shaanxi province and found work at a company that makes pre-packed roujiamo, a local specialty food similar to a hamburger.

She began dating a man who shared her love of travel, and they decided to get married in the groom's hometown of Xi'an this spring. But the nearby city where they lived wouldn't let them leave due to the Covid controls.

	<p>A day before the wedding, their city lifted the restrictions and the couple rushed to Xi'an for the ceremony. They awoke in the morning to find that Xi'an had banned public gatherings. A few family members gathered at Ms. Yuan's in-laws' apartment instead.</p> <p>She's now hunkering down at home, too wary to go anywhere.</p> <p>"You never know if you'll get locked down in some random place," she said. "It's a big problem."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/19 Putin tightens Russia security measures
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-declares-martial-law-in-four-regions-of-ukraine-it-claims-11666189993?mod=hp_lead_pos2
GIST	<p>MOSCOW—Russian President Vladimir Putin implemented a range of tighter security measures across the country and declared martial law in parts of Ukraine recently claimed by Moscow, as the Kremlin grapples with a faltering military campaign abroad and fallout from an unpopular troop mobilization at home.</p> <p>A decree signed by Mr. Putin on Wednesday gives local governments in each of the country's regions varying degrees of new authority to address security concerns. Measures are aimed at maintaining public order, boosting industrial production in support of the military campaign and protecting critical infrastructure, Mr. Putin said in a televised address to his security council.</p> <p>The implementation of martial law, which goes into effect on Thursday, grants Moscow-backed officials in the partially occupied territories of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson a number of powers.</p> <p>These include curfews, detention for up to 30 days of anyone, restrictions on freedom of movement, forced resettlement and the internment of citizens from any country deemed to be waging war against Russia, according to the text of the law published on the government's official legal information website.</p> <p>Increased security measures have also been introduced in Crimea, which Moscow annexed in 2014. The Crimean port city of Sevastopol is home to Russia's Black Sea Fleet. Moscow has blamed Ukraine for an explosion that damaged the bridge connecting Crimea and Russia.</p> <p>"In general, all this looks not so much as a struggle with an external enemy, but as an attempt to prevent a revolution ripening within the country," Abbas Gallyamov, a political consultant and former Kremlin speechwriter now living outside Russia, wrote Wednesday on his Telegram messaging channel.</p> <p>Mr. Putin said he decided to impose martial law because the Ukrainian government hasn't recognized the results of referendums staged by Russian occupation authorities in which they said voters chose to join Russia.</p> <p>It is unclear how the imposition of martial law will actually affect day-to-day life in areas that already have been under Russian military control.</p> <p>"I think that Vladimir Putin finds himself in an incredibly difficult position," President Biden said at the White House on Wednesday. "It seems his only tool available to him is to brutalize individual citizens in Ukraine, Ukrainian citizens, to try to intimidate them into capitulating. They're not going to do that."</p> <p>Mr. Putin's moves follow staggering Russian battlefield losses as well as violent protests within Russia against Mr. Putin's drive to conscript 300,000 more men to fight in the Ukraine conflict.</p> <p>Hundreds of thousands of men have fled the country to avoid conscription, and public polls and social media show that Russians are increasingly fearful and worried about the war.</p>

Such rising disquiet threatens to undermine Mr. Putin's government as it girds itself to navigate the next stages of the war.

Following Mr. Putin's mobilization announcement, demonstrations erupted in more than two dozen cities across the country among Russia's beleaguered activists, who have faced fines and jail time for opposition to the war.

The websites of dozens of the country's independent news organizations have been blocked for not toeing the official line on the war, and human rights groups have been shuttered.

Throughout the conflict, some [Russians have protested](#), distributing dissident literature and scrawling antiwar slogans in public spaces and teaching Russians how to use virtual private networks, better known as VPNs, to access blocked media.

Tatiana Stanovaya, head of R.Politik, a political-analysis firm in Moscow, said the new rules could give authorities greater control over communications and computer-related technology.

"What does this mean in practice?" she wrote on Telegram. "The possibility of total control over the internet, every site, every server? Full access to management systems of any companies?"

On Wednesday, some local leaders assured residents that life would continue as normal.

"We will take the necessary measures to improve the security of civilian facilities and critical facilities," Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin wrote on his blog. "At the same time, I must say that at present no measures are being introduced to limit the normal rhythm of the city's life."

On Monday, Mr. Sobyenin said the mobilization in Moscow had ended and those who had been called up, but hadn't yet reported for duty no longer had to comply.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told the state news agency RIA Novosti that the martial law order didn't mean that Russia's borders would be closed.

Mr. Putin also ordered his government to draft a decree on the creation of a special coordination council led by Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin. He said that "issues relating to the special military operation are solved not only by relevant defense and security agencies, but also the entire system of state administration."

The council will include representatives of defense and security agencies, the Kremlin and officials who handle social and economic affairs. The move would "ensure close interaction with all regions of the country," Mr. Putin said.

Mr. Mishustin told his deputies Wednesday that the council would take measures to fulfill targets that support Moscow's military campaign, such as supplying equipment and technology for the military and ensuring transportation and construction needs are met.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/19 Portland homeless camp: 150 stolen cars
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/nation-world/city-breaks-up-homeless-camp-pulls-out-150-stolen-cars-tons-of-trash-live-pigs-big-four-corners-natural-area-portland-oregon-housing-crisis-damage-neighbor-george-donnerberg-park-and-rec-environmental-impact
GIST	PORTLAND, Ore. (KATU) — After years of unsanctioned camping, the City of Portland, Oregon, has cleared the Big Four Corners Natural Area .

KATU was there when cleanup crews pulled in two weeks ago and tracked the progress for days. They pulled out more than 150 stolen cars, tons of trash, and even live pigs from the area. It was one of the most extensive camp cleanups in the city's history, and the damage left behind is shocking.

[KATU spoke with](#) neighbor George Donnerberg as bulldozer blades pushed massive piles of trash just behind him. Donnerberg lives a few hundred yards away from the natural area.

For years, Donnerberg has sounded the alarm about the tents, trash and stolen cars. He warned city, county and state leaders about the chainsaws, explosions and gunshots at night. Donnerberg said they knew, and that's what makes his hike through the damage even more heartbreaking.

"I'd been around the periphery of this, and I hadn't been this deep in it before on the advice of police, but I'm just amazed by the destruction in here," said Donnerberg. "It's way worse than I thought, and I thought it was bad."

The Big Four Corners covers and borders land managed by multiple jurisdictions: The Portland Bureau of Parks and Recreation, The Portland Water Bureau, The Bureau of Environmental Services and the Multnomah County Drainage District. KATU reached out to all of them to ask about the cleanup. What will it take in terms of time and money?

The mayor's office said it's still a work in progress, and crews will continue to clear the property for several more weeks. A spokesman also said campers were, "offered an immediately available shelter bed, travel to that shelter space, storage for additional belongings and other services."

When asked why it took so long to clear this particular encampment, he said. "the size of the Big Four Corners site requires a vast majority of SSCC [Street Services Coordination Center] staff resources and numerous partners to help address. [The pandemic](#), cost, size of the job and multiple jurisdictions/partners are all contributing factors."

As far as the plan moving forward to restore the natural area, he said Portland Parks and Recreation and the Bureau of Environmental Services may be able to provide comments. KATU reached out to Portland Parks and Recreation but did not hear back. Commissioner Mingus Mapps, who oversees the Portland Water Bureau and the Bureau of Environmental Services, sent the following statement:

"The plan for Portland Water Bureau and Bureau of Environmental Services properties at Big Four Corners and beyond is to utilize private security and Portland Police Neighborhood Response Team as needed to keep their areas clean, safe, and functional."

"We are committed to restoring the Big Four Corners Natural Area, which is important to all Portlanders as a groundwater drinking water source, and for the stormwater, flood prevention, recreation, and wildlife habitat services this area provides. The Bureau of Environmental Services and Portland Parks & Recreation are working together to assess the conditions in preparation for restoration. This will take time. Once a site assessment is complete, the City will restore plantings and habitat. Restoration and continued security go hand in hand. City bureaus have installed fencing, barriers, and will continue to take other measures to protect staff, the public, and this critical natural infrastructure."

"Specifically, around protecting drinking water infrastructure: The Water Bureau is currently working with our partners at BES/MCDD/Parks to prevent any more unwanted vehicles and camping from occurring near our groundwater well site. This will involve using barriers and bollards to block entry points for unwanted vehicles while still allowing access for city and county employees, as well as people walking, biking, and rolling on the non-motorized Marine Drive Trail."

"It'll be years and years, really decades, to undo some of the damage," said Bob Sallinger, the Director of Conservation at Portland Audubon.

He knows the wooded wetland better than just about anyone else and what it took to turn it into one of Portland's crown jewels.

"Some of the worst damage is in the interior, where people are really off the grid and really set up elaborate camps and cut down a lot of trees," said Sallinger.

Sallinger said he's been tracking the destruction at the Big Four Corners for at least six years, sending the city photos and explaining the risks.

That includes vegetation and ground cover ripped out by vehicles that left ruts deep enough to cradle a propane tank, human waste and erosion that sent land sliding into the Columbia slough, impacting water quality, and violence that kept the community out.

"This place was extremely unsafe. I know that sometimes people are uncomfortable with having somebody say that, but the reality was there's a lot of crime in a place like this," said Sallinger. "A lot of needles, a lot of contaminants, whether it's feces or engine oil or other things that are out on the landscape now."

Sallinger said Portland Audobn has repeatedly reached out to city leaders, hoping to be a part of a holistic solution to the homeless crisis, offering resources to ensure natural areas are protected, or at least part of the conversation.

"I think what's been so sad is that what we've heard back from the city for many years now is just - they don't have time, resources, capacity or structure to even work with groups on issues like this," said Sallinger. "They're basically in such disarray that even where resources are available, they're not able to take advantage of them. And I think that's somewhat shocking after so many years."

George Donnerberg is angry and wondering how the city plans to keep campers from returning.

He and his neighbors now know they won't be coming back to the Big Four Corners anytime soon. It's not the same land they used to love.

"It'll take time. It'll take a lot of money if you ever want to get this back to the pristine environment that it once was," said Donnerberg. "It's sad. I'm old enough now that I don't think I'll see it back to its original state. It'll take that long."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/19 Doctors urge: flu shots, Covid boosters
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/health-leaders-urge-public-to-get-flu-shots-covid-boosters-ahead-of-flu-season#
GIST	<p>Flu season is coming but we still have time to prepare. That's the advice from Dr. Indi Trehan, an attending physician at Seattle Children's Emergency Department.</p> <p>"We are in a good position sort of the hurricane is coming and we know it and we have time to evacuate and the evacuation would be to get your flu shot, COVID shot and mask up in crowded spaces," said Trehan.</p> <p>Tehran and Health leaders insist a flu shot is crucial this fall. The Washington State Hospital Association is pleading with people to consider a flu vaccination this year as many hospitals are stretched to capacity.</p> <p>Tehran said it's not uncommon for long waits at Children's, often with patients waiting in the hallways.</p> <p>"I think we are in a very precarious situation but we have the benefit of forewarning we are seeing flu rise in Europe, southeast parts of the U.S., moving its way westward to PNW I think the timing is going to because we are having an increase in COVID cases couple new variants on the way in other parts of the world," said Trehan Wednesday.</p>

"It's terrifying," said Darcy Jaffe, Vice President of Safety and Quality with the Washington State Hospital Association when asked about the potential for a twindemic, a severe flu season, and COVID cases.

Jaffe said most hospitals statewide are dealing with capacity and staffing issues.

"People are waiting in Emergency Departments longer than we are comfortable with, hospitals are struggling with discharging those who need long-term care, plus many are dealing with staffing shortages. To have that complicated with an influx of people getting sick with flu is going to make a difficult situation potentially an emergency," said Jaffe.

She insisted the most important thing the public can do is get vaccinated.

In an email today the Department of Health urged the public to take precautions ahead of the flu season in Washington and any new strains of COVID.

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) is urging the public to get the influenza (flu) vaccine in addition to a COVID-19 booster this fall to keep themselves and others safe and out of the hospital.

"Flu can be unpredictable and sometimes severe," said Tao Sheng Kwan-Gett, MD, MPH, Chief Science Officer. "To protect your family's health, getting vaccinated against influenza with a flu shot or nasal spray vaccine should be part of the fall routine for everyone 6 months and older. It's also the perfect time to get up to date on COVID-19 vaccines and boosters too."

DOH says getting a flu vaccine reduces the chance of flu illness and protects individuals from serious flu symptoms. The flu shot can be safely given at the same time as a COVID-19 vaccine or booster.

For weekly flu activity reports, educational materials, vaccine information, and other flu prevention resources, visit www.KnockOutFlu.org. For more information on COVID-19 vaccines, visit the COVID-19 website.

According to Public Health Seattle King County online post about the flu shot, "Everyone under the age of 19 can get the flu vaccine and other recommended vaccines at no cost from a healthcare provider that participates in the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program, regardless of insurance.

A provider may charge a fee to administer the vaccine, but you can ask them to waive this fee if you cannot afford it.

In past years flu activity was low because of social distancing and limited travelers but health leaders said the flu will likely make a comeback this year, especially with lifted COVID-19 precautions like masking, social distancing, kids back in school and travel.

The Washington Department of Health stresses that the flu vaccine is your best protection.

"It's really a chance to protect ourselves and not let this next wave hit us too hard, " Tehran said.

Public Health also posted, "If you haven't received a COVID-19 vaccine yet, or you're due to get a booster, you can save time by getting both at once. You will likely feel sore where you got the shots (typically on the upper arm) and may experience common side effects like fatigue, fever, headaches and other flu-like symptoms. However, research shows that side effects are similar whether you get the shots together or separately."

As of today, the bivalent COVID booster became available for children ages 5 to 11. Seattle Children's Hospital says parents can make appointments through the hospital and told KOMO News it has about 1500 doses now and is expecting more soon.

	Deanna Dudley, Children's Program Manager said due to staffing issues for now some parents may find it difficult to find the vaccine elsewhere. Dudley urged parents to consider the vaccine now especially with flu season coming soon. The hospital tweeted about the vaccine's availability and said the shot is available at its Seattle campus and its South Clinic in Federal Way.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/19 Spokane PD plan: more officers on street
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/local/spokane-police-departments-plan-more-officers-on-street/293-88ddb33-22ef-4748-b3f6-70696b51fb02
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — The Spokane Police Department is sharing an early look into its plan to get more officers on the streets to tackle crimes.</p> <p>In the meantime, the Spokane community is weighing in on that plan and how it can make the community safer.</p> <p>Ben Osborne, manager of Zanies Smokeshop in Spokane's Emerson-Garfield neighborhood, wants his business to be a hometown shop.</p> <p>"Zanies has always been what it is now," Osborne said. "It's open to everybody. It's a hippie shop."</p> <p>But, he says the crime in this neighborhood makes it difficult to maintain that experience for customers. Amidst the vandalism, the drugs and the shootings near there, Osborne hopes for a better, safer community.</p> <p>"The problem has become so enormous that I don't really know where they can start as far as fixing it," Osborne said.</p> <p>"One of the things I've noticed is this increase in tension and willingness to resort to violence more quickly," Spokane Police Chief Craig Meidl said.</p> <p>Meidl says an increase in calls and officer fatigue are the results of this trend. Because of this, the department wants to restructure its precincts and patrols. That means moving some of its current officers from other units to patrol the streets.</p> <p>"The hope is, starting January, we'll have 40 more officers on patrol than what we currently have as well," Meidl said. "This is one of many layers that we're looking at to fix the crime issues that we have in Spokane. Having officers on the street that can respond more quickly to calls is one prong. But, there are so many layers to this."</p> <p>Osborne welcomes the idea of seeing more officers around.</p> <p>"When the presence is there, bad guys don't want to see the cops," Osborne said. "They're going the opposite direction."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/19 Seattle clinic to offer free eye exam, glasses
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/seattle-clinic-offering-free-eye-exams-glasses-for-those-in-need
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - The Seattle/King County Clinic will be offering free eye exams and prescription glasses for those who cannot access affordable eye care.</p> <p>The clinic, held at McCaw Hall at the Seattle Center, runs from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. from Oct. 20 to Oct. 23.</p>

	<p>Free admission tickets will be available at Fisher Pavilion at Seattle Center (corner of 2nd Ave. North & Thomas Street/Lenny Wilkens Way) each day beginning at 6 a.m., with the doors to the clinic opening at 7:30 a.m.</p> <p>Once the clinic opens, patients are escorted to the service facility and admitted by ticket number to be registered and receive free eye care.</p> <p>This is the seventh year Seattle/King County Clinic has held a free clinic at Seattle Center.</p>
Return to Top	You can learn more information here.

HEADLINE	10/19 Area schools cancel outdoor activities
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/several-puget-sound-area-schools-cancelling-outdoor-activities-due-to-poor-air-quality
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON - As of 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 19, Seattle had the worst air quality in the world. Seattle kept the ranking at second-worst air quality throughout the day.</p> <p>According to IQAir, Seattle had an air quality of 236, which falls in the "very unhealthy category." It surpassed Lahore, Pakistan, which held onto the worst air quality for most of the day. Lahore and Seattle are the only cities in the world in the "very unhealthy category."</p> <p>As a result of the unhealthy air quality across the state, several school districts have canceled outdoor activities and practices or moved them indoors:</p> <p>Seattle Public Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recess: Keep all students indoors. Keep activity levels light. • Physical Education: Keep all students indoors. Keep activity levels light. • Athletic Events and Practices: Cancel outdoor athletic events and practices or move them to an area with safer air quality, either indoors or to a different location. <p>"We will continue to monitor regional air quality forecasts and provide updates as necessary," SPS said.</p> <p>Tacoma Public Schools</p> <p>"At the recommendation of the WA State Department of Health, Tacoma Public Schools is canceling outdoor activities, or moving them indoors. Schools and teams are communicating with families. We continue to monitor air quality and will provide further updates if needed," the district wrote.</p> <p>Bellingham School District</p> <p>"If air quality remains in the "unhealthy" level, we will keep students indoors and provide accommodations to students who may need them. This includes altering activities so they are less strenuous, making changes to recess and lunch time routines, and moving classes like physical education indoors," the district said.</p> <p>Otherwise, schools are open and operating on the normal bell schedule today.</p> <p>We use the Department of Ecology Air Monitoring Network to check air quality, and we use the Washington Department of Health Guidelines to help us make decisions for our outdoor activities during the school day and our after-school programs including athletics.</p> <p>If the air quality improves during the day and moves to "moderate" or "unhealthy for sensitive groups," the school will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an inside and outside option during recess and encourage light activity • Move activities indoors when possible • Encourage those with health conditions to stay indoors • A reminder that masks are an option for staff and students who would like to wear one.

Lake Stevens School District

Outdoor athletics and activities are once again being moved inside or canceled. Updates will be shared by coaches or athletic directors. All outdoor community facility use is canceled today. Students were kept indoors for recess and PE today to protect their health.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/19 Iran drones in Ukraine crowded skies
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/19/us/politics/ukraine-drones-iran-russia.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The Iranian Shahed-136 drone was designed to explode on impact, and on Monday, Russian forces launched dozens of them at targets across Ukraine. One hit an apartment building in Kyiv, the capital, killing four people, including a woman who was six months pregnant.</p> <p>As the war enters its ninth month, the Shahed is among dozens of types of drones, including remote-controlled surveillance types and programmable flying bombs, being used on battlefields in Ukraine. They also include military drones produced by the United States, Turkey and Russia and commercial-grade drones made in China.</p> <p>The full range of models, and which countries supplied them, is unclear. But the rapid increase in the number and types of unmanned drones deployed in the war signals that smaller, less-expensive weapons like the Shahed will probably become a staple of modern armed conflicts.</p> <p>Some are surveillance drones — unmanned aerial systems in military parlance — essentially small propeller-driven winged aircraft controlled by radio signals. Larger models of this type can spy on enemy forces or carry missiles and bombs to attack targets on the ground. They land and can be refueled and flown again.</p> <p>These larger surveillance drones can be expensive, so both Ukrainian and Russian forces have employed quadcopters — battery-powered commercial drones that are far cheaper. Quadcopters fly shorter distances and hover over a position before dropping small weapons like grenades on enemy troops and vehicles. They are designed to be recovered, rearmed and used again after their batteries are recharged.</p> <p>Many of the weapons terrorizing Kyiv and other civilian areas of Ukraine, however, are what the defense industry calls “loitering munitions.” These drones explode on impact, which is why they are sometimes referred to as kamikaze drones.</p> <p>The United States has shipped Ukraine weapons of this type since early in the war.</p> <p>In March, the Pentagon announced it would send 100 “tactical unmanned aerial systems” called Switchblades. The next month, the administration said it would provide another 300. Eight days later, the Defense Department said it would send 120 Phoenix Ghost drones to Ukraine. In July, the United States provided funds for Ukraine to buy 580 more of them.</p> <p>In August, the Pentagon said it would send Puma drones — small aircraft that soldiers toss into the air to launch and then control by remote control from up to nine miles away. Pumas can stay at altitudes of about 500 feet.</p> <p>The White House is not providing Kyiv with larger drones like the Predator and Reaper that U.S. forces used in the wars that began after the Sept. 11 attacks. Both aircraft can fly for hours while sending live video feeds of the ground and carry laser-guided missiles and guided bombs.</p> <p>Soon after Russia’s invasion, Ukrainian troops began using Turkish Bayraktar TB2 drones to hunt Russian soldiers far beyond the front lines. These drones, which have a 39-foot wingspan and carry small guided munitions, were Ukraine’s main long-range weapon until the United States began supplying mobile rocket launchers known as HIMARS and the guided munitions for them.</p>

The Iranian Mohajer-6, another weapon that Russia is flying over Ukraine, is similar to the Bayraktar. It has a wingspan of 33 feet, a range of more than 1,240 miles and can drop or launch small munitions. Iran also provided the Shahed-136 to Houthi fighters in Yemen in 2021, the director of the Defense Intelligence Agency told the Senate Armed Services Committee.

In addition to the Shahed-136 and Mohajer-6, Russian troops have used at least 10 other types of drones, according to Conflict Armament Research, an independent group based in Britain that identifies and tracks weapons and ammunition used in wars around the world. They include the Orlan-10 and Kartograf surveillance models, which Russia produces.

The proliferation of these weapons is rapidly increasing around the world.

A 2017 survey by the Center for the Study of the Drone at Bard College found that nine countries were developing or producing 26 models of loitering munitions.

“Today, there are more than 100 models of loitering munitions in development or production in at least 24 countries,” said Dan Gettinger, who studies armed drones and founded the center.

“In recent years, the armed conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh and Ukraine have contributed to a growing interest and investment in loitering munitions in Europe — France, Italy and the UK have launched efforts to acquire loitering munitions in the past 18 months,” Mr. Gettinger said.

The Shahed-136 is the most powerful Iranian weapon that Russia is using in Ukraine. It weighs about 450 pounds, he said, and is believed to contain between 80 and 90 pounds of explosives.

After repeated setbacks, Russia’s use of the Iranian drones could be a sign that it is running low on precision-guided weapons.

“This is more about a losing power trying to make up for its battlefield losses by sparking fear from a new kind of weapon targeting civilians,” said Peter W. Singer, an author on defense topics and fellow at the think tank New America. “It also gives a taste of what is to come as the technology gets more advanced and more widespread — just as missiles went from novel and not all that effective to the norm of war, the same will happen with swarms of armed drones.

“As recently as a few months ago, there was still a debate among both about whether drones would be effective in a major conventional war, as opposed to just counterterrorism and insurgency,” he said. “That debate is now utterly over.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/19 EU to sanction Iran over drones
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/19/world/europe/eu-sanctions-iran-drones.html
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS — The European Union agreed on a fresh round of sanctions on Iran on Wednesday, this time over providing drones that Russia has used to strike battlefields and civilian targets in Ukraine, according to three E.U. diplomats.</p> <p>The sanctions will target the company that manufactured the Shahed-136 drones, diplomats said, as well as three individuals. They have been agreed on by national ambassadors. To enter into force, they must be greenlighted by all E.U. member countries through a written procedure, which is expected to conclude Thursday morning.</p> <p>Iran has denied supplying Russia with drones for use in Ukraine. Josep Borrell Fontelles, the E.U.’s top diplomat, said on Monday that the European Union was looking for “concrete evidence” of Iran’s role in the drone strikes in Ukraine.</p>

	<p>The latest sanctions add to other punitive measures the bloc has imposed on Iran for reasons unrelated to the Ukraine war. Earlier this week, the European Union added two entities and several individuals, including two key figures in Iran’s morality police and the country’s information minister, to its sanctions list over the recent violent crackdown on peaceful anti-government protesters.</p> <p>Earlier on Wednesday, Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, the bloc’s executive arm, called Russia’s targeted strikes on Ukraine’s civilians and infrastructure “war crimes.”</p> <p>“The international order is clear. These are war crimes,” Ms. von der Leyen told European lawmakers gathered in the French city of Strasbourg. “Targeted attacks on civilian infrastructure with the clear aim to cut off men, women, children of water, electricity and heating with winter coming — these are acts of pure terror.”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/19 Pacific Northwest hot, smoky October
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/19/us/seattle-portland-air-quality.html
GIST	<p>Wildfires burning across the Pacific Northwest through a season of record-breaking heat and dry weather have spread a blanket of smoke across Seattle, Portland and other parts of the region, where residents are breathing some of the planet’s worst air this week.</p> <p>Photographers looking to capture Seattle’s iconic skyline have found it shrouded in haze as the city carries the scent of a mass bonfire. While the warm temperatures seemed to offer an extended season of hiking and biking, the smoke kept many indoors.</p> <p>The Seattle area recorded a high of 88 degrees over the weekend; the city has never recorded an 80-degree day so late into fall. But by this weekend, highs will drop into the 50s, bringing relief as a cool front spreads across the Pacific Northwest. Forecasters said that breezes could blow away the smoke, while rain douses lingering wildfires and the region gets its first true taste of fall.</p> <p>“Good news: The rainy season is almost upon us,” declared the Washington State Department of Ecology.</p> <p>The region has endured a series of record-setting heat waves in recent years, some of which scientists have determined were made worse by climate change; more are expected as the world warms. Skies have been shrouded for much of September and October as easterly winds have blown smoke from wildfires lingering in the Cascades, bringing air quality to unhealthy levels. Some schools have canceled outdoor activities.</p> <p>On Wednesday, weather stations throughout the Pacific Northwest were recording the worst air quality in the United States, while Portland and Seattle ranked among the worst big cities globally. Health officials urged people — especially pregnant mothers, children, older adults and people with chronic health conditions — to limit their exposure and encouraged them to use air-purifying fans, while officials near Portland banned wood-burning fires.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/19 Forests burning in western Cascades
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/inside-the-bolt-creek-fire-and-the-newly-burning-forests-of-the-western-cascades/
GIST	<p>INDEX — Thinning fuels on a hand crew in the first few days of the Bolt Creek fire, Cassandra Brazfield recalls hearing thuds as trees hit the ground.</p> <p>Early on, the fire — that for weeks has smoldered and smoked out Western Washington — behaved in interesting ways, she said. “It would just burn when it was super humid.” It would light up the “duff,” a dense, peaty layer of partially decomposed moss and litter, and the understory would catch fire. Trees would fall unexpectedly.</p>

“It was scary,” said Brazfield, a firefighter with the state Department of Natural Resources.

Monday afternoon, wearing soot-stained yellow and green fire gear, she was swinging a metal device to measure relative humidity at the top of [Heybrook Lookout](#). Brazfield is her team’s “eyes in the sky” high above a milky-white smoke plume. The team was intentionally burning up remaining fuels on the northwest edge of the fire.

The percentage of humidity had risen from the low 20s over the weekend to the 70s, a welcome shift more favorable for wildland firefighting.

It was a “pivot point,” incident commander Leonard Johnson said Monday. Starting Thursday afternoon, a cool, westerly wind should give Western Washington a lasting reprieve from the smoke, said Matt Dehr, lead meteorologist with DNR. With it, wet weather beginning Friday is expected to bring respite for the roughly 300 people working to contain the Bolt Creek fire.

Over an inch of rain is forecast to fall on most fires, Dehr said, with most areas possibly seeing rain by 3 p.m. Friday.

But the cooldown comes after low humidity, easterly winds, high temperatures and the region’s prolonged dry spell compounded to help [ignite several new fires](#) last weekend. The [Nakia Creek fire](#) east of Vancouver, Clark County, grew to nearly 2,000 acres from 150 acres within hours Sunday, forcing thousands of people to evacuate. The weather also lit up existing fires, like Bolt Creek, which could be seen ablaze by drivers on Highway 2.

The past two months, Johnson said, similar weather conditions have helped drive a new phenomenon as Seattle saw the driest July-September period on record: Now, wildfires are widespread along the western flank of the Cascades.

There’s fire in Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. There’s fire in Gifford Pinchot National Forest. And, he said, “we have fire clear down in the Washougal area.”

A warming West

Spring this year in Washington was unusually cool and wet, while summer was hot and dry. Some seasonal weather events may be “flukes” but they build upon conditions destabilized by a warming planet, according to state climatologist Nicholas Bond.

“Maybe it’s an early indication of climate change,” Bond said. Ongoing fires burning west of the Cascade crest could be a dress rehearsal for longer fire seasons, and longer periods of incessant smoke in urban or metropolitan areas, he said. “It’s not going to be every summer, by any means, but this is the sort of thing that’s going to be happening more.”

While average statewide rainfall hasn’t decreased significantly in recent years, summer rainfall has been declining. These conditions have primed Western Washington forests for wildfires that can ignite abruptly and spread quickly.

Reliable communication and well-maintained evacuation routes are just some of the preparations rural communities should be making now, rather than later, Bond said.

Even though the Puget Sound region is poised to receive a long-awaited dose of precipitation, he warned that rain and wind from the first storm of the season could trigger landslides and knock down trees near homes, trails and roads.

It’s important people stay away from the Bolt Creek burn scar and other fire areas this weekend, Dehr said. Those areas will be most susceptible to flooding and mudslides.

“People who live in those regions have to recognize that [wildfires] won’t happen all the time, but when they do, it can be a big deal,” he said.

A mountain town

Talk of climate change can be daunting for communities in the Cascade foothills. But the surge of westside fires is leading some to reimagine their future.

“We just haven’t dealt with that on the west side,” Skykomish Mayor Henry Sladek said Monday. “Some people still don’t believe in climate change, but this is an example of what’s happening.”

After the Bolt Creek fire erupted, the residents of Skykomish dealt with a short power outage followed by closures of Highway 2. The town depends on seasonal travel and tourism — September, the month the fire started, is usually one of the busiest for tourist-dependent businesses. This year, establishments along the town’s main thoroughfare have seen a massive dip in traffic — to about a quarter of their usual customers, Sladek said.

“It’s really starting to get to people,” he said. But residents aren’t completely dependent on income from people passing through, nor are they unacquainted with profound change.

The town has reached the tail end of a seismic [cleanup project](#) that began in 2006. The town served as a switching station for trains in the early 20th century and became an entrenched source of ground pollution, as oil, diesel and petroleum leached into the soil and even into its namesake river.

After contaminants were discovered, plans were made in the early 2000s to remove as much of the toxic material as possible.

A barrier built 30 feet underground now shields groundwater from contaminants that still remain.

Its old buildings are now juxtaposed with new streets, sidewalks and street lights. The town, having rid itself of fossil fuel infrastructure only to be thrust into new and unpredictable wildfire, is both changing and “frozen in time,” Sladek said.

The Skykomish mayor also owns Cascadia Inn, a 14-room lodge, café and bar built in 1922, and he and his wife have lived in the house behind it for 20 years. The former Seattleite remembers visiting Skykomish as a child and learning how to ski near Stevens Pass.

“This place has gone through a lot for a little town,” Sladek said. For him, the growing threats of wildfire, heatwaves and drought seem unavoidable, but not insurmountable. “We’ll all get through it.”

Mopping up, awaiting the rain

The Bolt Creek fire has burned over 14,600 acres (or 22.8 square miles) on private, state, tribal and federal lands along Highway 2 from the Beckler River campground on the east to just below Heybrook Ridge on the west.

It was first [reported early Sept. 10](#) near Forest Service Road 6510, north of Skykomish. In a week, it grew to over 10,000 acres.

While the investigation is pending, officials say the fire was human-caused.

Towns were evacuated. State officials intermittently closed the highway as smoldering trees toppled nearby. The smoky haze persisted, blowing throughout Western Washington.

Some of the landscapes it touched had never seen fire, according to historical records obtained by Johnson’s firefighting team. All of it was logged in the past 100 years, meaning much of the forest was dense, second-stage growth.

“The fire moves differently and at different speeds and it depends on how dry it is,” Johnson said. Right now, the forests “haven’t had any precipitation for so long that they’re just ready to burn. And most of the fuel, in almost all the forests, is available right now.”

The trees Brazfield remembers hearing crash to the forest floor, accustomed to northwesterly winds, were instead being hit with breezes from the east. The risk of falling trees coupled with mountainous terrain made it even more dangerous for firefighters, Johnson said.

“That’s why it’s taken so long to get this fire in shape,” said Don Ferguson, spokesperson for the incident management team.

From the start, the goal has been to keep the fire from spreading into populated areas, and to protect power lines, buildings and homes. Fire crews cleared out fuels while others bulldozed and hand-cut containment lines. They also relied on and monitored existing barriers like roads, rivers and streams, to act as containment lines.

Small planes and helicopters have intermittently dropped buckets of water on problem areas, Johnson said. The fire has mostly burned freely on the north side into the Wild Sky Wilderness.

As the sun began to set Monday, Kris Pflugh of Chewack Wildfire was using a pickaxe to pull up hot ash and dirt, exposing orange embers. Beside him, Kenny Dickinson sprayed down the hot earth. They were mopping up hotspots as they made their way down Beckler River Road, north of Skykomish.

Soon, crews like this one from Spokane, will get to go home. Officials hope the rain will subdue the fire until finally snow snuffs it out later in the year.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/19 Global first: Florida gas stations to sell pot
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/weed-is-coming-to-florida-circle-k-gas-stations-next-year/
GIST	<p>Bloomberg News - Weed is coming to U.S. gas stations.</p> <p>Circle K, the global convenience-store chain, signed a deal with Green Thumb Industries, one of the largest U.S. cannabis producers, to sell licensed marijuana at its Florida gasoline retailers. The partnership will begin next year with 10 of the company’s 600 locations in the state, Green Thumb said.</p> <p>The deal is a global first, given that legal marijuana has so far been sold only in stand-alone dispensaries in the U.S. and within pharmacies in countries such as Uruguay and Germany. By selling marijuana, which is still illegal at the federal level, at gas stations where consumers buy staples like snacks and cigarettes, the partnership may help push the drug further into the mainstream.</p> <p>The agreement will “continue to normalize” marijuana by integrating it with regular consumer products,” Green Thumb CEO Ben Kovler said in an interview. “This is a futuristic deal.”</p> <p>Financial terms between Chicago-based Green Thumb and Laval, Quebec-based Alimentation Couche-Tard, which owns Circle K, weren’t disclosed. Under the agreement, Green Thumb will lease space from Circle K locations.</p> <p>The Green Thumb outposts will be known as “RISE Express” stores and have a separate entrance from the gas station. Because Florida is one of several states where cannabis can be legally sold only for medical use, purchases are restricted to Floridians who have medical marijuana cards. Currently, that’s around 700,000 people.</p> <p>Gas stations appear to be a good fit for weed because they are already where lots of Americans shop for age-restricted drugs such as tobacco and alcohol. Some locations have already ventured into cannabis,</p>

	<p>selling CBD products that don't contain the psychoactive ingredient THC and Delta-8 items, which give consumers a high, but fall through a legal loophole because they're derived from hemp.</p> <p>Green Thumb's Kovler said "there's appetite" from Circle K to work together in other states.</p> <p>A representative for Couche-Tard, reached by phone, didn't have an immediate comment.</p> <p>The arrangement could also help Green Thumb as it competes with other large multistate operators to build a national brand. Even though it only allows medical sales, Florida is still the second-largest U.S. market for marijuana, following California.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/19 Video game to boost quake preparedness
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/nw-college-creates-video-game-to-boost-earthquake-preparedness/
GIST	<p>The Big One is coming. Would you know what to do if an earthquake hit the Pacific Northwest?</p> <p>A new video game, released ahead of International ShakeOut Day on Thursday, can help get you ready for an earthquake or other natural disaster.</p> <p>Concerned that people in the Pacific Northwest are underprepared for earthquakes, a team of researchers at Lewis & Clark College in Oregon brainstormed an alternative form of media to target young adults, who they found are often excluded from messaging campaigns.</p> <p>Cascadia 9.0 is designed to make earthquake preparation more enjoyable. The game's name comes from the Cascadia Subduction Zone, a 600-mile fault off the Pacific coastline, which has the potential to produce a magnitude 9.0 earthquake.</p> <p>Inside the game, the player navigates urgent situations while traveling through a demolished city to find their dog, Tsu, who got loose after a massive earthquake. Along the way, the player must address the lack of clean drinking water, aftershocks and gas leaks.</p> <p>Initial results have shown gaming participants felt more confident about coping with some key earthquake-related challenges, such as finding and purifying water and having good sanitation. Cascadia 9.0 is available at cascadia9game.org.</p> <p>In recognition of International ShakeOut Day on Thursday, which is designed to raise awareness for earthquake preparedness, officials across Washington are sharing resources to help people make a plan for natural disasters. Major partners involved in the Washington ShakeOut include the state Military Emergency Management Division, the state Seismic Safety Committee, the state Department of Natural Resources and the state Emergency Management Association.</p> <p>According to the ShakeOut website, in most situations, if you feel shaking or get an earthquake alert, you should immediately drop onto your hands and knees where you are, cover your head and neck with one arm and hand (and crawl under a sturdy table or desk if there is one nearby) and hold on until the shaking stops.</p> <p>Looking for a lighthearted way to remember some key preparedness tips? Washington's Emergency Management Division created a parody to Smash Mouth's "All Star" with tips to be safe during an earthquake: "Hey now. Gotta drop down. Take some cover. Hold on. Stay down in your safe place until the shaking is gone," the song goes.</p>
	Return to Top <p><i>To learn more about ShakeOut and to register for the 10:20 a.m. earthquake drill Thursday, visit shakeout.org/washington.</i></p>

HEADLINE	10/19 Grocery chain merger impact to Seattle?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/grocery-chain-merger-would-affect-majority-of-seattle-area-households/
GIST	<p>Where do you most frequently buy your groceries?</p> <p>If you live in the Seattle area, chances are it's at one of four stores involved in the potential merger of supermarket chains Kroger and Albertsons.</p> <p>On Friday, Kroger announced plans to purchase Albertsons in a \$20 billion deal. In the Seattle area, Kroger owns the QFC and Fred Meyer chains while Albertsons owns its eponymous stores and Safeway.</p> <p>Market research data from Nielsen shows the majority of residents in the Seattle area say one of these four stores is where their household most frequently buys groceries.</p> <p>With so many Seattle-area households dependent on Fred Meyer, Safeway, QFC or Albertsons, the merger could have a far-reaching impact for local shoppers. In order to win federal approval, the two chains would have to sell hundreds of locations in areas with a lot of market overlap. And that could mean some changes to Seattle-area neighborhood grocery stores.</p> <p>Fred Meyer is the most popular grocery store in the Seattle metro, which includes King, Pierce and Snohomish counties. A projected 344,000 households, or 21% of the total, typically buy groceries at Fred Meyer, according to Nielsen.</p> <p>Safeway ranks second, the most-frequently shopped store for around 315,000 households, or 19.5%. QFC ranks fourth behind Costco, which is not involved in the merger. Roughly 153,000 households in our area, or 9.5%, typically shop for groceries at QFC. Albertsons is well behind the other three, in eighth place. It's the primary supermarket for around 40,000 households, or 2.5%.</p> <p>Add up the figures of the households most frequently shopping at these four stores owned by Kroger or Albertsons and it totals around 851,000 households, or 53%.</p> <p>Kroger and Albertsons cite competition with Walmart, the largest grocer in the U.S., as one reason for the merger. But in the Seattle metro, Walmart is not a dominant presence. Only 66,000 households, or 4%, most frequently shop for groceries at Walmart, according to Nielsen.</p> <p>Nielsen data shows some differences in the demographic profiles of Seattle-area shoppers at grocery stores owned by Kroger or Albertsons.</p> <p>The Nielsen data is based on surveys of nearly 5,700 adults age 18 and older in King, Pierce and Snohomish counties. The surveys were conducted from Feb. 2020 to Jan. 2022.</p> <p>Albertsons households had the highest median weekly spending on groceries, at around \$185. For the other three stores, the median was close to \$155. Part of the reason for higher spending at Albertsons could be that shoppers there had a larger household size, an average of 2.4 people (tied with Safeway). QFC had the smallest average household size at 2.1 people.</p> <p>QFC households had the highest median income at close to \$104,000. At the other end of the spectrum, the median income for Fred Meyer households was \$76,000. QFC shoppers were also the most likely to live in a dense housing type, such as an apartment, condo, or townhome/row house, at 47.5%. 64% of Albertsons households were single-family homes. It seems households that most frequently shop at QFC were most likely to be located in walkable neighborhoods, with QFC households having the highest percentage, 19%, not owning or leasing a vehicle.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/19 Tacoma: defective switch in rail derailment
----------	---

SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/sound-transit-train-derails-causing-disruption-in-tacoma/
GIST	<p>A malfunctioning switch was the reason a Sound Transit light-rail train derailed early Wednesday in downtown Tacoma, the agency said.</p> <p>No injuries were reported. The single-railcar T Line train was going less than 10 mph, making the day's first round trip after 5 a.m., with no passengers aboard, near South Seventh and Commerce streets, said spokesperson David Jackson.</p> <p>A temporary switch was installed recently, during the construction project to extend light-rail tracks into the Hilltop neighborhood. The train was returning southbound toward Tacoma Dome Station. The switch was replaced and service resumed by 10 a.m., Jackson said.</p> <p>Sound Transit will be "examining what happened," according to a post on Twitter. Dual trackways were recently built near the north endpoint at Theater District Station, to replace a wishbone-shaped tail track where trains have changed direction since 2003.</p> <p>The \$283 million Hilltop extension was supposed to open last month, but is delayed until a new target date of March 31. Several problems affected the schedule, including underground utility conflicts and stray electric current. Wednesday's derailment isn't expected to affect the project schedule, Jackson said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/19 Duck & cover: Great Washington ShakeOut
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/duck-and-cover-the-great-shakeout-to-take-place-thursday#
GIST	<p>The Great Washington ShakeOut is taking place Thursday at 10:20 am across the state. This is a chance for people to take cover and prepare for when an earthquake or tsunami hits.</p> <p>The Washington Emergency Management Division said 120 Washington tsunami sirens along the inner and outer coast will be tested using the real wailing sound of a tsunami warning. Alerts will also be sent out to people who have the MyShake Earthquake Early Warning App. NOAA Weather Radios will also sound an alarm.</p> <p>Maximilian Dixon, hazards and outreach program supervisor with the Washington Emergency Management Division said our state has the second-highest earthquake risk in the U.S and one of the highest tsunami risks. "This is our chance every year to get people to practice to drop to the ground, cover their head and neck and hold on in order to protect themselves during an earthquake but also to do tsunami evacuation drills," said Dixon.</p> <p>Dixon adds this is also a great opportunity for people to start thinking ahead and talk with their families about evacuation plans. He said it's important to have bags ready to go for when a natural disaster hits our area.</p> <p>"Now what are you going to do? How are you going to reunite, how are you going to communicate? If your kids are at school, your spouse is at work or you're at work and you need to meet up with your family you're separated so how do you do that," said Dixon.</p> <p>People are asked to prepare for any natural disaster. Dixon said an emergency kit should have about 2 weeks worth of stuff and adds people should get started on those as soon as possible.</p>
Return to Top	Click here for more tips on how to prepare.

HEADLINE	10/19 Putin declares martial law annexed areas
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/19/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#putin-declares-martial-law-in-occupied-ukraine-in-an-effort-to-tighten-control

MOSCOW — President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia declared martial law on Wednesday in four regions of Ukraine that Moscow recently annexed but that it does not fully control, a move that would allow the pro-Russian authorities to impose even tighter restrictions, including forced relocations, as Moscow fights to hold off Ukraine’s military advances.

Separately, Mr. Putin said he was handing more power to regional governors in areas of Russia, which would allow for significantly more restrictive measures to be introduced at home.

A presidential decree announced martial law in the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions — whose annexation by Russia last month has been condemned internationally as illegal. Russia has suffered weeks of setbacks on the battlefield, and its proxies in the southern region of Kherson have begun relocating civilians in [apparent anticipation of a major fight](#) for the regional capital.

Moscow has been ordering residents of the region living west of the Dnipro River to evacuate before a possible Ukrainian counteroffensive, a move that Kyiv [has dismissed](#) as scaremongering. Just before Mr. Putin’s speech, videos released on Russian media showed lines of civilians apparently boarding ferries at a river port to evacuate.

“I signed a decree on the introduction of martial law in these four constituent entities of the Russian Federation,” Mr. Putin said at the start of a meeting of his Security Council via videoconference, referring to the four Ukrainian regions that the Kremlin unilaterally declared to be part of Russia. “In addition, in the current situation, I consider it necessary to give additional powers to the leaders of all Russian regions.”

As of late last month, the Russian Army controlled most of the Luhansk and Kherson regions and about half of the Zaporizhzhia and Donetsk regions.

Martial law in the four annexed territories would allow the authorities to impose curfews, seize property, forcibly resettle residents to another region, imprison undocumented immigrants, establish checkpoints and detain people for up to 30 days.

Mr. Putin also ordered the creation of territorial defense forces, a type of civilian militia, in the four annexed regions, raising the possibility that Moscow’s forces may try to conscript Ukrainians into fighting their own forces.

The drive to compel Ukrainians to fight against other Ukrainians is part of a broader effort to mobilize hundreds of thousands of new fighters as its forces suffer huge casualties amid Ukraine’s push to retake territory.

Mr. Putin has grappled with growing anger at home over his call-up of about 300,000 reservists to fight in the war. Protests [have erupted](#) in far-flung cities, recruitment centers have been the target of arson, and thousands of military-age men have [packed planes and vehicles](#) to flee across Russia’s borders.

The separate decree allows for significantly more restrictive measures to be introduced in regions across Russia, including in Moscow, to more tightly control critical infrastructure facilities, public transit and communications. According to Mr. Putin, the regional leaders will be given additional powers “to ensure security.”

Russia’s upper house of Parliament, the Federation Council, approved martial law unanimously.

As with many Russian laws, there are provisions that allow for broad interpretation. For example, the law would allow for the suspension of activities of political parties, public organizations and religious groups, or any activity deemed to undermine Russian Federation’s defense and security.

[Return to Top](#)

SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/19/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#ukrainian-officials-accuse-the-pro-russian-authorities-in-kherson-of-scaring-civilians-with-an-evacuation-plan
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine — Russian occupation officials were moving civilians out of Kherson on Wednesday, another sign that Moscow’s hold on the strategic southern Ukrainian city was slipping, as President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia sought to reassert control over that and other occupied regions by declaring martial law.</p> <p>The move by Mr. Putin was an effort to tighten the Kremlin’s authority over Kherson and three other Ukrainian regions he recently claimed to annex, even as his army loses ground in those areas to Ukrainian forces and as Western allies dismiss the annexations as illegal.</p> <p>As Russian proxy officials in Kherson said they would move as many as 60,000 civilians to the eastern side of the Dnipro River and shift its civilian administration there, they appeared to be girding for a battle for control of the region. Amid a weekslong Ukrainian counteroffensive, the pro-Kremlin leader in Kherson, Vladimir Saldo, said the relocations would protect civilians and help Russian forces fortify defenses to “repel any attack.”</p> <p>Ukrainian officials dismissed the plans as “a propaganda show.” Andriy Yermak, the head of President Volodymyr Zelensky’s office, accused the Russian proxies of scaring civilians with claims that Ukraine would shell the city. He called it “a rather primitive tactic, given that the armed forces do not fire at Ukrainian cities — this is done exclusively by Russian terrorists.”</p> <p>Ukrainian forces have been advancing gradually for weeks along both sides of the river in Kherson, a region that Moscow seized early in the war and has declared part of Russia. Since late August, Ukrainian troops have damaged bridges near the city of Kherson, making it harder for Moscow to resupply the thousands of troops it has stationed there.</p> <p>Western analysts have suggested that the Russian positions in and around the city are untenable without the bridges, and U.S. officials have said that Russian commanders have urged a retreat from Kherson, only to be overruled by Mr. Putin. But Ukraine’s counteroffensive in the Kherson region has moved more slowly than its recent advances in the east, and it was far from clear whether its forces could soon mount a push to retake the city of Kherson.</p> <p>On Tuesday, the general Mr. Putin appointed earlier this month to command the war in Ukraine, Sergei Surovikin, said he was ready to make “difficult decisions” about the military deployments in the Kherson region, without specifying what those decisions would entail.</p> <p>Ukrainian officials have greeted the hints of a Russian pullback of at least civil administrators with caution, saying the announcements could be intended for internal Russian audiences, signaling commitment to protecting civilians or preparation for a Russian military action in the area. Videos released on Russian media showed lines of civilians apparently boarding ferries at a river port to evacuate to the eastern bank of the Dnipro.</p> <p>The Kherson region spans both banks of the river, with the city of Kherson, the regional capital, lying on the western side. The western bank is an expanse of pancake-flat farmland crisscrossed by rivers and irrigation canals, and one of the most pivotal battlefields of the war.</p> <p>Ukrainian troops had through the summer whittled away at Russian supply lines by firing American-provided precision guided rockets at the four bridges over the Dnipro River in areas Russia controls. All are now mostly destroyed.</p> <p>In late August, Ukraine opened an offensive with ground troops, advancing in bloody, slow-moving combat through several dozen villages while driving the Russian forces backward, toward the Dnipro. The Russian announcements of evacuating civilians and the civil administration could signal a faltering of military defenses, presaging a Russian pullback from the western bank of the Dnipro River in what would be a major setback for Moscow — but could also be a ruse.</p>

	Mr. Saldo, a Ukrainian politician who had switched sides at the start of the full-scale Russian invasion, told the Russian state news agency RIA on Wednesday that all ministries would evacuate to the eastern bank. The occupation government earlier on Wednesday said it would evacuate from 50,000 to 60,000 civilians across the river and onward to the occupied peninsula of Crimea or into Russia. Residents risked artillery fire from the Ukrainian Army or flooding from the destruction of the Kakhovka hydroelectric dam on the Dnipro River, Mr. Saldo said.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/19 Russia missiles strike across Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/19/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#as-ukraine-intensifies-pressure-in-the-south-russian-missile-strikes-rain-down-across-the-country
GIST	<p>Russian forces launched missile strikes against a string of targets in Ukraine over the past 24 hours, killing three civilians, damaging energy infrastructure and forcing residents to find cover in their homes or in shelters, Ukrainian officials said on Wednesday.</p> <p>Those and other recent strikes across Ukraine have caused hardship and death but have not halted Ukraine's attempts to regain territory, underscoring how Russia's targeting of civilian infrastructure in cities including Kyiv and other towns has not translated into fundamental changes on the battlefield.</p> <p>President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine said in an overnight speech that more than 10 regions in the north, east and south of the country had been attacked since Tuesday.</p> <p>Missiles rained down on the southern town of Orikhiv in Zaporizhzhia Province for almost seven hours, killing three people and wounding eight others, Oleksandr Starukh, the head of Ukraine's military administration in the region, wrote on Telegram. He said the attack had destroyed homes, an educational facility and the town council building, forcing 200 people to evacuate from the town and cutting off power and water.</p> <p>Even before this latest attack, most residents had already fled the town, which is squeezed between the Ukrainian and Russian front lines in an increasingly volatile battlefield in southern Ukraine. Ukrainian control of the town has stood in the way of Russian attempts to close in on the much larger provincial capital.</p> <p>Russia has pounded civilian targets in Ukraine since its full-scale invasion began in February, on occasion killing dozens of civilians in a single attack. But Moscow has escalated its attacks since Oct. 8, in response to an attack on a bridge that connects the Crimean Peninsula with Russia. The attacks have not stopped Ukraine from stepping up its own pressure in a counteroffensive to retake the strategically important southern region of Kherson.</p> <p>Control of that area, however precarious, matters to Russia. It allows Russian forces to operate on the western side of the Dnipro River, which divides the country into two. That, in turn, allows Russia to threaten the rest of the Ukrainian-controlled Black Sea coast, including the city of Odesa.</p> <p>Ukraine's energy infrastructure has been in Russia's crosshairs, and Mr. Zelensky said this week that 30 percent of the country's power stations had been struck. On Wednesday, missiles hit a power plant in the southern city of Kryvyi Rih, cutting off electricity, according to Oleksandr Vilkul, the head of the regional military administration.</p> <p>Missiles also struck a coal-fired power plant in Burshtyn, in western Ukraine's Ivano-Frankivsk Province, the head of the regional military administration, Svitlana Onyshchuk, wrote on Telegram. Attacks on western Ukraine, which is far from the war's front lines, are relatively rare.</p> <p>"A fire broke out," Ms. Onyshchuk wrote. "All services are working. Rescuers are on site."</p>

	<p>Shelling damaged three ambulances in Kharkiv Province in the northeast of the country on Wednesday, according to a statement posted on Facebook by the regional council, which said that nobody was injured. Ukrainian forces last month recaptured dozens of towns in the region, dealing a heavy blow to Russia and challenging President Vladimir V. Putin's war effort.</p> <p>Buttressed by air defense systems from its western allies, the Ukrainian military has improved its ability to shoot down missiles since the Russian invasion began in February. Ukraine's Air Force Command said in a statement that it had shot down four out of six cruise missiles and 10 self-destructing drones aimed at Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, and in Vinnytsia region, southwest of Kyiv, over the past 24 hours.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/19 Ukraine advances put limits Russia options
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/19/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#ukraines-advances-have-limited-russias-options-for-a-smooth-pullback
GIST	<p>Ukrainian military commanders in the Kherson region on Wednesday described small combat gains in recent days, but no dramatic breakthroughs that would prompt a move by Russian occupation officials to evacuate civilians. Week by week, however, Ukrainian advances have been closing the window for Russia for an orderly pullback from the western bank of the Dnipro River.</p> <p>Ukrainian howitzers are now nearly within range of the bridges and river ports over the Dnipro, which Russian troops would have to cross to retreat eastward toward Russia, military commanders said. Those guns could make a pullback bloody and chaotic for tens of thousands of Russian soldiers now on the western bank.</p> <p>Once in range, the howitzers could deliver round-the-clock barrages onto these escape routes, in contrast to the intermittent fire from long-range rockets now. Advancing howitzers to within range of the Dnipro bridges has been a war aim for the Ukrainian army since spring.</p> <p>A Ukrainian military intelligence officer serving in the Kherson region who asked to speak on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to comment publicly, said he anticipated the Russians would withdraw rather than fight on.</p> <p>"They will leave Kherson themselves," he said. "We created such conditions."</p> <p>It was not immediately clear how many residents would heed a call by local pro-Kremlin officials to evacuate or whether the evacuations would be voluntary. Many civilians have already fled the region.</p> <p>Ukraine has accused Russia of forcibly relocating thousands of adults and children from occupied areas to Russian territory since the war began under the guise of evacuating civilians from danger.</p> <p>Rights groups have said Russia is forcibly assimilating deported Ukrainian children. The Russian announcements could be catering to a domestic audience inside Russia, she said.</p> <p>"They want to prepare a demonstrative picture for their propaganda media that locals in the Kherson region are afraid" of the Ukrainian military, Ms. Humeniuk said.</p> <p>The evacuation of a portion of the civilians could telegraph plans for widespread bombardments in the Kherson region by the Russian army, the Ukrainian military governor of the Mykolaiv region, which borders the Kherson region, wrote in a post on the Telegram messaging app.</p> <p>The Russian army has been distributing leaflets in Kherson city encouraging residents to flee, according to photographs posted on social media.</p> <p>One shows parents with a small boy, all smiles, with a Russian flag in the background. The text says, "Save your family, move to the eastern bank."</p>

	<p>Residents have also received messages on their phones that urge them to flee the city. Serhiy, a retiree living in the city of Kherson said in a telephone interview on condition his last name not be revealed for security reasons.</p> <p>“A slow panic is setting in,” he said, as the prospect for a battle for control of the city looms. “People are quietly happy the Ukrainian army is close but don’t know how it will end for us.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/19 Russia moves troops, equipment out Syria
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/19/world/middleeast/russia-syria-israel-ukraine.html
GIST	<p>JERUSALEM — Russia recently redeployed critical military hardware and troops from Syria, according to three senior officials based in the Middle East, underscoring how its faltering invasion of Ukraine has eroded Moscow’s influence elsewhere and removing one of several obstacles to Israeli support for Ukraine.</p> <p>Russia, which has been a dominant military force in Syria since 2015 and helps maintain the Syrian regime’s grip on power, still keeps a sizable presence there. But the change could herald wider shifts in the balance of power in one of the world’s most complicated conflict zones, and allow Israel, Syria’s enemy and southern neighbor, to rethink its approach to both Syria and Ukraine.</p> <p>According to two senior Western diplomats and a senior Israeli defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity in order to speak more freely, Moscow recently transferred some troops and a Russian air-defense system out of Syria, removing one of the main restrictions on Israeli military actions in Syria.</p> <p>The officials had varying estimates about how many troops were withdrawn — two of them said two battalions, or between 1,200 and 1,600 soldiers, while the other said it was far more. But they all agreed that the number of combat troops had been reduced.</p> <p>The Israeli official also said that several Russian commanders had been redeployed from Syria to Ukraine, while Russia’s military leadership in Moscow has become less involved in day-to-day management of operations in Syria, including with military coordination with Israel.</p> <p>The moves follow a reduction of Russian leverage in former Soviet countries in Central Asia, where leaders say the war in Ukraine has distracted Russia from its traditional leadership role, undermining Moscow’s aura and grip.</p> <p>Since civil war broke out in Syria in 2011, President Bashar al-Assad of Syria has relied on military support from Iran and its proxies to keep rebels at bay, as well as from President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia. Russia has kept a military presence in Syria since the 1970s, but Mr. Putin significantly bolstered it in 2015 with several thousand Russian troops and aircraft, turning the tide of the Syrian war in Mr. Assad’s favor.</p> <p>An enemy of both Iran and Syria, Israel regularly strikes targets in Syria to prevent Tehran from cementing a foothold close to Israel’s northeastern border. In 2018, the risk to Israeli pilots during those raids increased after Russia moved a sophisticated air-defense system, known as the S-300, to Syria.</p> <p>Though control of the S-300 was never transferred to the Syrian government, the risk that it might be used against Israeli planes was a major reason Israel has rebuffed Ukrainian requests for military hardware since the Russian invasion began in February.</p> <p>According to the three officials, Russia has now removed the S-300 system from Syria to bolster its flagging invasion of Ukraine — reducing Russian leverage over Israel in Syria, and altering Israeli considerations with regards to Ukraine.</p>

Iran's growing military support for Russia, coupled with rising Russian strikes on Ukrainian civilians, have already resurfaced a debate in Israel in recent days about whether Israel should provide arms to Ukraine. Israel produces several air-defense systems that might be useful to Ukraine in shooting down missiles and drones, including the short-range Iron Dome, which Israel uses against rockets fired from the Gaza Strip, and the longer-range Barak 8.

An Israeli cabinet minister, Nachman Shai, said on social media this week that Iran's military assistance to Russia removed "any doubt where Israel should stand in this bloody conflict. The time has come for Ukraine to receive military aid as well, just as the USA and NATO countries provide."

But Mr. Shai does not speak for the Israeli government. On Wednesday, the Israeli leadership stressed that while it could provide Kyiv with early-warning systems to alert Ukrainian civilians about incoming strikes, Israel would not send arms to Kyiv.

In a statement, Benny Gantz, the Israeli defense minister said: "Israel supports and stands with Ukraine, NATO and the West — this is something we have said in the past and repeat today."

"This being said," he added, "I would like to emphasize that Israel will not deliver weapon systems to Ukraine, due to a variety of operational considerations."

Those considerations include Russia's lingering military presence in Syria, including a separate air defense system, the S-400, and large air and naval bases in Western Syria. Though Russia withdrew combat troops from Syria, they have been replaced by military police officers, the senior Israeli defense official said.

Israeli officials have expressed concern that further Russian drawdowns in Syria could allow Iran to expand its influence there.

Israel also wants to avoid any disruption to practices that allows Israeli and Russian commanders to communicate with each other and avoid conflict between their forces. An encrypted telephone line was installed in 2017 to connect a Russian air base in western Syria to an Israeli Air Force command center beneath a military base in Tel Aviv.

The mechanism helps the sides avoid overlap between Russian and Israeli actions, preventing incidents like one in 2018, when Syrian forces [shot down a Russian military plane](#) that they had apparently mistaken for Israeli, killing 15 Russians.

Israel also fears that the Kremlin might act to limit Jewish emigration from Russia, after the Russian authorities opened [a court case against the Moscow branch of the Jewish Agency](#), an Israel-based organization that helps Russian Jews establish new lives in Israel.

On Monday, Dmitri A. Medvedev, the deputy head of the Russian security council and former president, warned Israel against any "reckless" supply of military aid to Ukraine. "It will destroy all interstate relations between our countries," Mr. Medvedev wrote on social media.

Nevertheless, there are signs that Israel is providing more help to Ukraine than it did in the opening months of the war, when its assistance was limited to mainly humanitarian aid, including a field hospital.

Israel is providing Ukraine with basic intelligence about Iranian drones used by Russia, and has also offered to examine the remains of drones that crashed in Ukraine, according to senior Ukrainian and Israeli officials.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/19 Florida post-ian hundreds still in shelters
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/19/us/hurricane-ian-shelters.html

ESTERO, Fla. — Irene Peralta and Oscar Garcia first met at the Hertz Arena as teenagers 18 years ago, when it served as an emergency shelter after Hurricane Charley devastated a swath of Southwest Florida in 2004.

They sought shelter there again last month as Hurricane Ian approached, this time as a married couple with three children in tow. Three weeks after the ruinous Category 4 storm made landfall, they are preparing to move with several hundred other displaced Floridians from the arena to a longer-term shelter opening on Wednesday in North Fort Myers, still reeling from extensive damage to their mobile home and searching for options.

“We’re just waiting to see what help we can get,” Ms. Peralta, 31, said.

As of Tuesday, 476 people remained at two public shelters in Lee County, most of them at Hertz, an ice hockey and concert arena. The county took a direct hit, with 5,041 residential properties destroyed and 13,052 suffering major damage, records show. Many of their occupants have second homes or relatives with a guest room to fall back on, or can secure rental properties while they await federal disaster assistance, insurance adjusters and general contractors to help them begin rebuilding their lives.

But many of the people relying on shelters have none of those options. Sleeping side by side on American Red Cross cots and air mattresses are service-sector employees who are newly homeless and unemployed, retirees dependent on Social Security checks, and newcomers to the region with neither resources nor connections. Many were renters in North Fort Myers and other lower-income areas, barely making it even before Ian.

“I’m just at a standstill,” said Kionna Tobler, a single mother of two young boys. She lived in Pine Manor, a low-income neighborhood in Fort Myers, and did not have a car or formal lease before the storm. Her roommate, who held the lease for the \$1,200-a-month rental home, died shortly before Ian hit, she said.

Without a lease, Ms. Tobler is uncertain what help she will receive. Last Friday, she learned that the American Red Cross had assigned her a case manager, who she hoped would call soon.

“It’s just real frustrating,” she said. “We need better communication.”

The Red Cross has been operating the two shelters in Lee County and another in Collier County since early October. The organization has begun connecting shelter residents with case managers to speed up the process of finding them other housing, including rental properties, said Tony Briggs, a Red Cross spokesman.

Representatives of the Federal Emergency Management Agency have been on site at the Hertz Arena; the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development has also been working with families there.

Long before the storm, the cost of housing in Southwest Florida was a source of gnawing anxiety for many low- and middle-income residents. The metropolitan area that includes Fort Myers saw a 21.6 percent jump in rental prices year over year, the second-largest increase among the nation’s 100 largest such areas, said Shelton Weeks, the Lucas Professor of Real Estate at Florida Gulf Coast University. A typical two-bedroom apartment commands \$2,000 a month, he said — a price that will most likely jump because of reduced supply and surging demand after the storm. While that price reflects the national average, it strains the budget for many in the Lee County area, Dr. Weeks said.

Mr. Garcia, his family’s sole wage earner, paid his parents about \$800 a month in rent to live in the mobile home they owned.

Buying property may be even more out of the question. Amir Neto, director of the Regional Economic Research Institute at Florida Gulf Coast University, said he had identified just 129 properties for sale in Lee and neighboring Charlotte County for \$250,000 or less, and none in Collier.

Ruth Rodriguez, 80, who has been staying at Lee County's other active shelter, at the Estero Recreation Center, had been renting in the now-destroyed Indian Creek mobile home community near Fort Myers Beach when the storm came through. She had hoped to purchase a home there for well under \$100,000.

"The houses were nice, the price was right, and then all this happened," said Ms. Rodriguez, a widow without relatives to support her. "There's just nowhere to go."

She will most likely move to Georgia once she figures out how to buy or lease a car to replace the one she had, which was washed away, she said.

Late last week, some of those staying at the recreation center said they were keeping each other in good spirits.

"We'll be OK," said Tracy Salters, 42. She and her husband Darron, 47, moved to North Fort Myers from Pennsylvania just weeks before the storm and were renting a tiny apartment for \$2,000 a month until they could become established.

She expects that her housekeeping job will rebound, and her husband continues to work at a flooring company.

At the Hertz Arena, though, the trauma of the storm and the strain of shelter living was getting to people.

"Everyone in here has a story," noted Barbara Kolc, 78, who narrowly escaped the flood that surged through the Indian Creek mobile home community, where she lived with her husband, Kenneth, 65. "You can tell by the look in their eyes. It's like a horror movie."

Ms. Kolc, who recently finished cancer treatment and is awaiting a PET scan to verify that the disease is in remission, was hopeful that the Red Cross would move her and her husband to a hotel.

"I'm keeping a positive attitude," she said. "Otherwise I wouldn't be alive. I was saved twice."

The residents include people who were homeless before the storm, and who have mental health conditions, substance abuse disorders and other medical needs. A team of traveling nurses is tending to them as best as they can, sending people to hospitals and other care centers as needed.

"Yeah, patience is wearing thin," Mr. Garcia, 32, said. His wife agreed, recounting a fellow shelter resident who had an outburst after their 2-year-old ran into him last week.

"I can't really get a good night sleep," he added, noting that his co-workers at a roofing firm have noticed his fatigue.

On Monday, Lee County announced that people at both shelters would be moved to a new location in a former grocery store in North Fort Myers by week's end. The Florida Everblades, a minor-league ice hockey team that plays at Hertz Arena, has its first game of the season scheduled for Oct. 29.

The Red Cross intends to remain in the region as long as needed and will provide mental health services there, but a state contractor, CDR Maguire, will manage operations.

The news rattled Ms. Salters.

"Everybody is upset," she said on Tuesday as she prepared for the move with other shelter residents.

She had hoped to stay in Florida and remain with her new employer, a hotel and resort management company. But apartments are too expensive, based on ads she has seen, or just unavailable. There are no vacant hotel rooms nearby, and she and her husband do not own a car.

	<p>“Honestly, I think I’m going to try to convince my husband to go to New Jersey,” she said, explaining that they have family there.</p> <p>For Ms. Peralta, the announcement was even harder to take. The Hertz shelter is only a few miles from her children’s schools, while the new one is much farther away. She is hoping that she and her husband can repair their mobile home — even if one room at a time — so the children can maintain their routine.</p> <p>“We just want to go back to our house,” she said.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/19 Sawant: SPD not probing poop vandal
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/seattle-councilmember-sawant-says-her-property-is-being-vandalized-criticizes-police-investigation/
GIST	<p>Seattle Councilmember Kshama Sawant criticized the city’s police department Wednesday for its response to repeated “disturbing incidents” at her home.</p> <p>According to Sawant, bags of human excrement have been thrown on the lawn of her private residence six times, including as recently as last week, and the Seattle Police Department has failed to properly investigate.</p> <p>“The material used in these repeated attacks is classified as biohazardous waste. The police informed me the material can’t be sent to their lab for further investigation due to its hazardous nature. That seems quite odd considering that hospital labs do tests on human fecal matter all the time, but it does speak to the danger of having it repeatedly thrown in one’s yard,” Sawant wrote in a letter to police and city leadership on Wednesday, noting she had to call poison control on one instance after her dogs got into the bag of waste.</p> <p>“Most concerning is the very high likelihood that this extreme and hostile behavior is politically motivated, and could turn into more serious and dangerous harassment,” she added, noting past threats made against her.</p> <p>According to Sawant, the police have failed to seriously investigate the incidents reported by her and her husband, including ignoring two witnesses, refusing to test the fecal matter, not taking video evidence collected by a neighbor and not investigating a recent email sent to Sawant in which the sender calls her the “the queen of [expletive]” and tells her to “sit on [her] throne of human excrement.”</p> <p>The police department would not release any reports related to the incidents on Wednesday, citing the investigation as ongoing, but said it is doing its due diligence to investigate Sawant’s claims.</p> <p>“The department takes incidents involving public officials seriously, and investigators have canvassed for evidence, gathered information from witnesses and reviewed everything collected thus far,” a statement from the department read. “At this time, the department has not found any evidence this case would meet the city or state standards for hate crime laws, but SPD will follow available leads should new information arise. The department encourages anyone with additional information about this case to contact police.”</p> <p>SPD Detective Patrick Michaud said Wednesday that the report doesn’t meet state or city standards for a hate crime, but the department would continue to investigate.</p> <p>Michaud did not share whether any other local elected official had any open harassment complaints or complaints related to incidents at Sawant’s house, citing a policy against identifying victims.</p> <p>Last month the council unanimously passed a resolution “condemning harassment, threats, and political violence against elected officials, election</p>

workers, those seeking elected office, and other public servants,” in step with the Metropolitan King County Council passing similar legislation. The resolution followed an [incident this summer](#) in which the Rev. Cary Anderson of Seattle’s First AME Church was reportedly shot with a BB gun while campaigning for a vacant seat in Washington’s 30th Legislative District.

Harassment or provocation of local elected officials came to the forefront in Seattle during protests against police violence in summer 2020, when activists went to the homes of several City Council members and some, including Councilmember Alex Pedersen and now-President Debora Juarez, [reported intimidating behavior](#) like written messages left at their homes. Then-Mayor Jenny Durkan was the subject of significant protests at her home and enough reported [threats and harassment](#) that she had [SPD staff round-the-clock security detail at her home](#) for her last year in office.

As a socialist and the furthest political outlier on the council, Sawant has faced opposition from the community ranging from a [failed recall attempt in 2021](#) to death threats [during the first months of her time on the council in 2014](#) and [as recently as last winter](#).

Mayor Bruce Harrell, who is in Buenos Aires for a summit of international mayors, spoke to Sawant on Wednesday after being named in her SPD complaint letter, according to the Mayor’s Office.

“These incidents go against our core values as a city. Elected officials should not be harassed at their homes. While Mayor Harrell does not direct individual investigations, we have been assured that SPD will follow all standard protocols and practices regarding these incidents in the appropriate manner,” a spokesperson for the mayor wrote Wednesday. “The mayor has spoken directly to Councilmember Sawant to discuss and understand her concerns.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/19 Officials: wildfire caused by pyrotechnic
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/washington-wildfire-caused-by-pyrotechnic-police-seek-tips/
GIST	<p>CAMAS, Wash. (AP) — A wildfire in southwest Washington state that ballooned in size Sunday, causing regional air quality issues, may have been started by a firework or firearm, officials said.</p> <p>The Nakia Creek Fire started Oct. 9 on Larch Mountain, northeast of Camas.</p> <p>Clark County Fire Marshal Dan Young said this week that someone visiting Larch Mountain spotted smoke and got video on his cellphone, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported.</p> <p>In the video, starts of smoke can be seen as well as two women, two men and a light-colored Subaru, and investigators would like to speak to those people, Young said.</p> <p>“We’re not sure what they were doing; we’re calling it a pyrotechnic at this time,” he said. “We don’t know if it’s a firework or a firearm, or something like that.”</p> <p>Since Sunday when the blaze spread quickly and caused ongoing evacuations, improved weather conditions have allowed firefighters to reduce the threat to nearby homes.</p> <p>Officials said Wednesday the fire was the number one priority in the country because of its potential risk to life and the resources it will take to put it out, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.</p> <p>“We’re not out of the woods yet,” said Dave Larson, deputy incident commander for the Oregon Department of Forestry, the agency that has taken charge of the firefighting.</p> <p>Fire officials are feeling confident with rain expected Friday, Larson said.</p>

	<p>It will be about finding a “sweet spot” that takes advantage of the rain and keeps firefighters safe amid potential mudslides.</p> <p>“We’re aware of that and making sure everyone is taking the proper precautions,” Oregon Department of Forestry spokesperson Natalie Weber said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/19 Seattle air quality among worst in world
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/seattle-air-quality-among-worst-in-world/
GIST	<p>As the days of smoke-filled air from ongoing wildfires in the Cascades continue, air quality in Seattle remains an issue.</p> <p>Seattle ranked as the worst city worldwide for air quality and pollution at one point Wednesday afternoon, according to IQAir, a Swiss air-quality technology company that also operates a real-time air-quality information platform. Portland and Vancouver, B.C., also ranked in the Top 10.</p> <p>Seattle ranked ahead of Lahore, Pakistan, for a time as the two cities with the least healthy air quality. Delhi, India, ranked third. Later in the day, Lahore overtook Seattle, which still ranked second in the world.</p> <p>The unhealthy air quality means all adults should avoid unnecessary time outside. People with heart and lung disease, people over 65 or under 18, pregnant people, and outdoor workers are generally more at risk when breathing in smoke, according to the state Department of Health.</p> <p>Seattle Public Schools on Wednesday recommended students stay indoors and that recess and physical education classes were at a light level, due to air quality. The school district also advised schools to cancel outdoor athletic events and practices or move them indoors or to an area with a safer air quality.</p> <p>Winds from the Pacific Ocean are expected to bring rain and cleaner air to the Seattle area by Friday and push out some of the smoke, said Jacob DeFlicht, a meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Seattle.</p> <p>Temperatures are expected to drop and hang around the mid-50s through the weekend. Rainfall may be as much as a half-inch to three-quarters of an inch.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/19 WHO: Covid still global health emergency
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/covid-19-still-a-global-health-emergency-who-says/
GIST	<p>The World Health Organization said Wednesday that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be classified as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC), almost three years after it was first recognized as such back in January 2020.</p> <p>The determination was made last week at a meeting by the Emergency Committee on COVID-19, according to Dr. Tedros Adhanom, director-general of WHO.</p> <p>"The committee emphasized the need to strengthen surveillance and expand access to tests, treatments and vaccines for those most at risk," Adhanom said in a briefing. "And for all countries to update their national preparedness and response plans."</p> <p>The committee acknowledged that the pandemic has gotten better, but believes the world must remain vigilant as the COVID-19 virus has proven unpredictable.</p> <p>"While the global situation has obviously improved since the pandemic began, the virus continues to change, and there remain many risks and uncertainties," Adhanom said. "This pandemic has surprised us before, and very well could again."</p>

	<p>WHO defines a PHEIC as "an extraordinary event" that could harm other countries through the spread of a disease. A PHEIC could require a coordinated international response effort, and is often "serious, sudden, unusual or unexpected."</p> <p>Last week, meanwhile, Dr. Anthony Fauci, President Biden's chief medical adviser, described the spread of the new COVID variant known as BQ.1 as "pretty troublesome." The strain, and a descendant called BQ.1.1, have already grown to make up more than 10% of new infections across the U.S.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/20 Shadow govt. plots in Putin's backyard
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/belarus-opposition-government-plots-against-vladimir-putin-in-ukraine-alliance-proposal?ref=home
GIST	<p>Belarus' opposition, led by Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, is plotting to form an alliance with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to try to hamper any hopes that Russia may have of territorial expansion beyond Ukraine and further into Europe.</p> <p>The concern is that Russian President Vladimir Putin is eyeing Belarus much like how he's eyeing Ukraine—and hoping to envelope Belarus into Russia itself, Valery Kavaleuski, a foreign affairs representative for the Belarusian opposition leader, told The Daily Beast.</p> <p>"Russians are looking at us in the same light as they look at Ukraine," Kavaleuski said. "This is a state that is temporarily dependent. This is the nation that does not deserve to be next to Russia, so they all have to be 'Russified.'" This is their basic understanding of how the world should work."</p> <p>Concerns have been mounting in European countries that Putin is interested in invading countries beyond just Ukraine for months now. Some fears have grown that Putin is interested in attacking the Baltics, Poland, or even the U.K. and the United States.</p> <p>And an incursion or takeover in Belarus, in theory, could give Putin easier access to Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland.</p> <p>"When you look at the map, you see that these are basically the most important countries on the way from Russia to Western Europe," Kavaleuski told The Daily Beast. Democratic Belarus and Ukraine should be working closely to resolve the "grave threat to our statehood in both countries," he said.</p> <p>It's not clear if Putin has designs over Belarus in the near term. Belarus' relationship with Russia is complex—the U.S. State Department assessed early this year that it's not clear where the power of the Belarusian dictator, Alexander Lukashenko, ends, and where Putin's power begins. Moscow and Minsk have established what they call a "union state," in which each year the two countries fuse their banking, military, and other sectors closer and closer together.</p> <p>Just this year, Lukashenko has allowed Russia to barrel in and use Belarus as a launching ground for attacks on Ukraine, including the failed effort to capture Kyiv early in the war.</p> <p>In recent weeks, Belarus and Russia have been working on launching a joint military grouping and are conducting live fire exercises in Belarus. Russia is currently sending approximately 9,000 troops and hundreds of armored vehicles into Belarus in preparation for potential deployment, just as Russia faces mounting losses in Ukraine, Belarusian defense officials said.</p> <p>But Tsikhanouskaya, who ran for president in 2020 against Lukashenko and is recognized around the globe as the legitimate representative of the Belarusian people, is reading between the lines that Lukashenko is not an equal partner to Putin and has almost entirely ceded his power to Moscow. Her judgment is that now is the time to turn a new page with an eye to the future—one where Lukashenko is not necessarily in power.</p>

“Belarusians are not equal to Lukashenko. Lukashenko is a disgrace to my country. It is him and Putin who are dragging our country into the war. Lukashenko is not the decision-maker anymore, the Kremlin is,” Tsikhanouskaya said in her alliance proposal to Zelensky.

Tsikhanouskaya noted in remarks early this month that recent battlefield losses could weaken Lukashenko, providing pro-Democracy Belarusians a window.

"We have a distracted Russia that is about to lose this war. It won't be able to prop Lukashenko up with money and military support as in 2020," she said at the Warsaw Security Conference.

Ukraine and her team ought to band together for “joint action” moving forward, she said.

“We are proposing to build an alliance with democratic Belarus,” Tsikhanouskaya said in her proposal. “I am convinced that Russia will be defeated, and Ukraine will restore its territorial integrity and defend its independence. Ukrainians are now writing the history not just of their own, but that of the world... We are ready for joint action with Ukraine.”

The alliance would be focused on building close relations across multiple spheres, from social to economic, as well as military and diplomatic relations, her team told The Daily Beast. Kavaleuski said their team would be interested in security guarantees that Ukraine is working to gain as well.

Forming an alliance would likely be a natural next step, Scott Rauland, the former chief of mission at the U.S. Embassy in Belarus, told The Daily Beast.

“It would be in Zelensky’s best interest to make common cause with the Belarusian opposition. They have a common enemy,” Rauland said. “They’ve faced similar levels of repression from Russia in different ways, but the pattern has been largely the same.”

And if Lukashenko were to one day be ousted from power, pushing back against Russian influence would be key, Rauland noted. Tsikhanouskaya and her team “would be ready to serve as a transitional government should Lukashenko ever leave the scene,” he said.

Tsikhanouskaya is on the same page. In August, she and her team established a temporary executive body, the United Transitional Cabinet, in an attempt to centralize her team’s efforts to create conditions for free elections and “ensure the transit of power from dictatorship to democracy.”

Belarus’ opposition is not expecting a quick response from the Zelensky administration on the potential partnership, Kavaleuski said, noting that his team suspects that the quick formation of any such alliance might be viewed by Lukashenko as a provocation.

“The Ukrainian government now is very, very cautious with regard to communicating with the Democratic Belarus, they are concerned that these contexts might provoke Lukashenko into invasion,” Kavaleuski said. “We understand as a region so we are taking our time. We are not sort of pushing them because we understand that the stakes are very, very high.”

Zelensky’s office did not immediately return a request for comment.

Lukashenko has been warning in recent days that he views neighboring countries’ activities and partnership with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as aggressive and provocative, with an eye towards Poland and Ukraine.

Ukraine has maintained a defensive line near the Belarus-Ukraine border in a recognition that Belarus could potentially launch an attack on Ukraine from the north.

But as the Belarusian opposition sees it, there’s room for positive thinking.

	<p>“Even though we don't have the resources of the state, we have the legitimacy of the Belarusian people we have legitimacy of the international community, and if we have the support—the political support, diplomatic support—of Ukraine, now we can do much more for Ukraine and for our own country,” Kavaleuski said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/19 Russia war in Ukraine enters new phase
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/ukraines-utilities-threatened-russia-wars-phase-91781912
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine -- When a missile struck a power station less than a mile from his apartment on the outskirts of Kyiv, Oleksander Maystrenko didn't panic, run to a bomb shelter or consider evacuating, even though he lives close to what suddenly has become the Russian military's main target in the war: anything related to Ukraine's vital infrastructure.</p> <p>His neighbors also haven't budged, despite the fact that Tuesday's attack — marked by a loud explosion — killed three people, severely damaged two facilities inside the plant's compound and temporarily knocked out power to about 50,000 households, according to Kyiv Mayor Vitaliy Klitschko.</p> <p>“We aren't afraid because we aren't just prepared logistically; we are morally prepared,” Maystrenko said outside his apartment building, where he and two neighbors sat on a bench and smoked only hours after the attack.</p> <p>This is what the latest phase of Russia's nearly 8-month-old war in Ukraine looks like. Moscow has openly declared its intention to increasingly strike power stations, waterworks and other key infrastructure. One Ukrainian energy official said Wednesday that 40% of the country's electric power system had been severely damaged, and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Russian forces have destroyed 30% of Ukraine's power stations since Oct. 10.</p> <p>But Maystrenko and his neighbors say they are prepared.</p> <p>If the Russians knock out the power, there are stocks of flashlights and candles, he said. If there's no gas for stoves, he has a plan to build a rudimentary stove in front of the building's entrance and use firewood that has been collected to heat it. Water has been bottled and jars of pickled vegetables and canned goods have been safely stored.</p> <p>Everyone knows to have plenty of blankets and warm clothes for the winter, he added.</p> <p>“It's never been a secret that this power plant is a target, but we've been preparing since this war started,” Maystrenko said. The preparations have created a sense of community as well as a united front among neighbors, who once knew each other only in passing and are face a common enemy, he said.</p> <p>The attacks have come at a critical time, with winter approaching. Klitschko said that Thursday marks the start of the heating season for Kyiv, which like most urban centers in Ukraine and even Russia uses a Soviet-era central system controlled by the city that provides heat for apartment buildings and businesses.</p> <p>Following a meeting between Zelenskyy, government ministers, members of energy enterprises and some local officials, presidential adviser Kyrylo Tymoshenko said there would be power supply restrictions across Ukraine from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. beginning Thursday, along with the use of street lights being limited in some cities.</p> <p>“Please take this seriously,” Tymoshenko said on his Telegram channel. “This applies to residents of ALL regions of the country. ... These are forced steps. Therefore, we all work together on our front!”</p> <p>One area where power and water were reported knocked out by shelling was Enerhodar, the southern city is next to the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, one of the war's most worrisome flashpoints. Missiles</p>

also severely damaged an energy facility near Zelenskyy's hometown of Kryvyi Rih in south-central Ukraine, cutting power to villages, towns and to one city district, the regional governor said.

Using energy supplies as a weapon isn't a new tactic for the Kremlin, particularly when it comes to Ukraine.

"Energy was always quite a holy cow for the Russians, and they claim that by controlling energy they can control the country," said Hanna Shelest, the director of security programs at Foreign Policy Council Ukrainian Prism, based in Kyiv.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who declared martial law in four illegally annexed regions of Ukraine, has used his ability to turn off the gas that passes through the country's extensive, Soviet-era pipeline as leverage. His tactic has been used not just against the government in Kyiv, but also against energy-dependent nations in Europe, who built pipelines via the North Sea for Russian gas.

Under its new strategy, the Russian military hopes to destroy enough of Ukraine's infrastructure to make life so intolerable that residents will blame their own government, Shelest said.

Putin has called Ukraine a failed state and a historical part of Russia. In trying to make Ukrainians suffer, he hopes they will believe him, she said.

"What we see now is that it is definitely not working so well," Shelest said, adding that Ukrainians are increasingly directing their rage at Putin.

Zelenskyy's admission that Russia had knocked out nearly a third of Ukraine's power stations was noteworthy, said Mason Clark, an analyst at the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War.

"If the Russians can keep up that sustained damage, and the Ukrainians can't repair it, that could actually start to have an effect," he said.

Clark said he didn't believe Russia would be able to affect the Ukrainian population's overwhelming support for their military in taking back the territory seized by Moscow.

Recent attacks by what Kyiv describes as Iranian-supplied drones and missiles against civilian housing and other nonmilitary targets "seem to be just terror attacks, essentially to try to intimidate the Ukrainian population," he said.

Russia has used such scare tactics throughout the war out of "a misguided belief that they will be able to force the Ukrainians to surrender and force negotiations," Clark said.

From a military sense, Russia's use of the Iranian-supplied drones and Kalibr and Iskander cruise missiles against Ukrainian infrastructure is a "very poor use of limited-precision munitions," Clark said.

The Russians are struggling with dwindling supplies of these high-end weapons, he said, adding that a more strategic move would be to save them for the battlefield, because Ukraine's air defenses have succeeded in intercepting and shooting down many of the drones.

"It's a waste by the Russians of very expensive and limited systems in an attempt to likely achieve a terror effect that isn't going to sway the Ukrainian government or population," Clark said.

Repairing infrastructure often falls to local administrations to handle. The port city of Odesa in southern Ukraine designated crews to help neighboring Mykolaiv, which has been under Russian bombardment for weeks.

	<p>In the Kharkiv region, government official Roman Semenukha said Sunday that while repairs to heating systems were underway around the recently liberated city of Kupiansk, it's a slow process that first must restore electricity, gas and water.</p> <p>"I want to emphasize that private households will be connected to the gas supply, but the situation with high-rise buildings is a bit more complicated, for various reasons," said Andrii Besedin, an adviser to the head of the Kharkiv military administration.</p> <p>Regional authorities in Kharkiv also are assessing the need for firewood, Besedin said, adding that warming shelters will be set up and authorities would offer to evacuate those who want to leave for the winter.</p> <p>"Those who wish to do so (will move) to safe areas, where there are all communications. We will work every day to restore the critical infrastructure of these networks," he said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/19 Health issues drinking Navy jet fuel water
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/drinking-navy-jet-fuel-spills-caused-long-term/story?id=91624248
GIST	<p>Jamie Simic says that she, her husband Brian and their three children were living at the Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam on Oahu, Hawaii, last year when the whole family began to get very sick.</p> <p>"I was lethargic, we were getting rashes and then the gastro pain. There was just this litany of lists," she told ABC News' "Nightline."</p> <p>Simic said her children's teeth were falling out, and they had lesions on their heads.</p> <p>They weren't alone says Nastasia Freeman. Freeman, who was living on the base with her family, said her 12-year-old son Noah has been in and out of the hospital since last year.</p> <p>"He's dealt with vomiting, diarrhea and he is really struggling," she told ABC News. "He's just doing worse and it didn't seem to get better."</p> <p>Amanda Feindt, a U.S. Army major who was living on the base, said her family experienced abdominal pain, skin rashes and migraines.</p> <p>Four families have come together this summer to file a lawsuit, which alleges that their illnesses were caused by a massive leak of jet fuel that poisoned the base's water supply.</p> <p>The Navy has admitted that the nearby fuel storage facility, called Red Hill, experienced two leaks in 2021 -- one in May and one in November -- that spilled more than 30,000 gallons of fuel. The facility is 100 feet above the water supply.</p> <p>A local digital news site, Honolulu Civil Beat, published footage it claims shows the November spill captured on video filmed by a worker at the site. In the video, liquid spews from an overhead pipe, creating a small river.</p> <p>The State Department issued a warning 10 days after the spill, recommending that people not use water from the naval base water system.</p> <p>"The Navy's response from the outset was really bungled," Christina Jendra, investigative reporter at Honolulu Civil Beat, told ABC News.</p> <p>"They waited an entire week after fuel gushed into that tunnel to shut down the drinking water well, which was located just 380 feet away," she added.</p>

The Department of Health had started hearing from families like the Simics, Freemans and Feindts, all of whom complained they were smelling fuel in their water.

“We were exposed from May to November,” said Freeman. “That is a lot of time to be drinking jet fuel, bathing in jet fuel and all of these things.”

Jamie Simic told ABC News she became aware of the problem when she went to make a drink and claims the ice she was going to use was yellow with jet fuel.

The lawsuit alleges that the Navy “harbored toxic secrets” and failed to disclose the contamination. The families claim they continue to deal with health issues associated with the spill.

Capt. Michael McGinnis, the U.S. Pacific Fleet’s doctor tasked with handling the spills, told ABC News that “it was during a very brief period of time; we have no evidence that supports chronic long-term, ongoing event as far as exposure or contamination.”

“They haven’t accepted responsibility for the extent of the harm,” Kristina Baehr, one of the lawyers representing the families, told ABC News. “They’re telling people there’s no chronic risks. It’s not true. My clients have chronic effects.”

The facility was shut down in March and a task force has been launched to ensure the fuel is removed. The Navy announced it would install 12 new groundwater wells to monitor where the spilled fuel goes.

The Navy is currently trying to find a way to get all the remaining fuel out of the storage tanks at Red Hill, a process they expect will take until July 2024.

Until then, the families have banded together in a lawsuit hoping to get some justice.

“I’m still hoping that we’ll have accountability and we’ll make sure that those that are sick get a continuum of care,” said Simic. “And we make sure that this never happens again.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/19 Arizona refuses remove border containers
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/arizona-refuses-us-demand-remove-containers-border-91766831
GIST	<p>PHOENIX -- Arizona has refused the federal government's demand to take down double-stacked shipping containers it placed to fill gaps in the wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, saying it won't do so until the U.S. moves to construct a permanent barrier instead.</p> <p>The Arizona Department of Emergency and Military Affairs dug in its heels in an Oct. 18 letter to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, saying “the containers will remain in place until specific details regarding construction are provided.” It was signed by Allen Clark, the department's director.</p> <p>A regional spokeswoman for the Bureau of Reclamation did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Arizona’s refusal in the most recent flap between the Biden administration and Republican-led border states over immigration policies.</p> <p>The federal agency told Arizona officials in a letter last week that the containers were unauthorized and violated U.S. law. The bureau also demanded that no new containers be placed, saying it wanted to prevent conflicts with two federal contracts already awarded and two more still pending to fill border wall gaps near the Morelos Dam in the Yuma, Arizona, area.</p> <p>Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey ordered installation of more than 100 double-stacked containers that were placed over the summer, saying he couldn’t wait for the U.S. Customs and Border Protection to award the contracts it had announced for the work.</p>

	<p>Migrants have continued to avoid the recently erected barriers by going around them, including through the Cocopah Indian Reservation. The Cocopah Indian Tribe has complained that Arizona acted against its wishes by placing 42 of the double stacks on its land.</p> <p>The border wall promoted by former President Donald Trump continues to be a potent issue for Republican politicians hoping to show their support for border security.</p> <p>President Joe Biden halted wall construction his first day in office, leaving billions of dollars of work unfinished but still under contract. The Biden administration has made a few exceptions for small projects at areas deemed unsafe for people to cross, including the gaps near Yuma.</p> <p>The Center for Biological Diversity raised a different objection to the shipping containers on Wednesday, filing a notice of intent to sue Ducey's administration over what the environmental group said are plans to erect more shipping containers along the border. The group said the move will obstruct a critical jaguar and ocelot migration corridor.</p> <p>Ducey's office said it could not comment because it had not received an official notice from the center.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/19 Millions in South under frost, freeze alerts
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/millions-people-frost-freeze-alerts-cold-temperatures-hit/story?id=91752316
GIST	<p>The cold air that's led to snow and sub-freezing temperatures across the Midwest and Great Lakes in the last few days is spreading across the southern United States.</p> <p>Over 75 million Americans are under frost or freeze alerts as the cold weather moves south.</p> <p>The temperature in Jacksonville, Florida, reached 42 degrees on Wednesday, with a wind chill that brought the temperature down to 37 degrees Wednesday morning, which marks the earliest recorded wind chill value in the 30s in Jacksonville's fall season.</p> <p>On Wednesday morning, dozens of records were tied or broken.</p> <p>Austin, Texas, hit 38 degrees; Jackson, Mississippi, reached 30 degrees; Charlotte, North Carolina, tied its record low of 30 degrees; Kansas City, Missouri, dipped to 25 degrees; and Cedar Rapids, Iowa, hit a low of 16 degrees.</p> <p>In the Great Lakes region, heavy snowfall combined with leaves still on trees caused many branches to fall on power lines leaving thousands of customers without electricity.</p> <p>Up to 18 inches of lake-effect snow fell in northern Wisconsin on Monday. Around 18.1 inches of snow fell in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan on Monday and Tuesday, breaking the 2-day snowfall record, the NWS Marquette said.</p> <p>Other parts of the U.S. aren't experiencing the cooler weather, as Alaska and southern California are both unseasonably warm.</p> <p>In Alaska, the cities of Juneau, Sitka, Ketchikan, Yakutat, Haines, and Skagway have all had their warmest start to October on record.</p> <p>The National Weather Service issued a heat advisory for parts of Southern California, with temperatures rising into the mid-90s from San Diego to Anaheim this afternoon.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/19 Taiwan 'fully prepared' China invasion
SOURCE	https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/taiwan-fully-prepared-for-any-chinese-invasion-defense-chief/2715365

GIST	<p>Taiwan's top defense chief on Wednesday said the military is "fully prepared" to defend the country against any Chinese invasion.</p> <p>"Taiwan's military would be 'fully prepared' for any Chinese invasion whether Beijing decides to move up or push back a purported timeline to do so," Defense Minister Chiu Kuo-cheng said.</p> <p>His comments came as the Taiwanese military held a live-fire drill early today "simulating the use of cannons and tanks to repel invading Chinese forces," official Focus Taiwan reported.</p> <p>The drills were held in offshore Penghu county.</p> <p>"The military knows what it will have to do, whether in the next second or the next hour, while preparing for war. It will not sit idly by whether Beijing moves up or pushes back (its timeline to militarily invade Taiwan), it will have its own timeline, and it will pay attention to signs and make forecasts about possible developments accordingly," Chiu said.</p> <p>The minister reiterated the "need for the military to defend itself if it sustained a 'first strike' from China's People's Liberation Army (PLA)."</p> <p>"Just like if someone tries to push you, you must dodge or deflect him," he said.</p> <p>In Penghu county, the Taiwanese military held the monthly exercise, firing howitzers, mortars, machine guns, and automatic weapons "at simulated enemy forces attacking a beach."</p> <p>China considers Taiwan as its "breakaway province" while Taiwan insists on its independence since 1949 with independent diplomatic relations with 14 nations.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/19 China drops goal overtaking US economy
SOURCE	https://www.newsweek.com/china-xi-jinping-economy-goal-growth-gdp-2035-us-1752707
GIST	<p>Chinese leader Xi Jinping appeared to revise his long-term economic outlook when he opened a major political event over the weekend, hinting at modest growth that may see China fail to surpass the U.S. Beijing's two-step plan to build what it calls a "great modern socialist country in all respects" by 2049, the centennial of the People's Republic of China, involves first raising levels of public wealth and doubling the national economy by 2035.</p> <p>To achieve that, economists believed China would need to maintain annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth of at least 5 percent, a once-realistic trajectory that might have seen it overtake the U.S. economy in GDP terms—valued at \$23 trillion versus China's \$17.73 trillion in 2021, per World Bank figures.</p> <p>This first milestone, known as the "basic realization of socialist modernization," was declared in 2020 and had been expected to take 15 years. But on Sunday, as Xi opened the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) twice-a-decade national congress, the target appeared less ambitious.</p> <p>China Abandons GDP Target</p> <p>Two years ago, Xi said it was "entirely possible" to double national GDP and GDP per capita by 2035. His latest pronouncement, however, omitted the former.</p> <p>"By 2035, our overall development goal is to significantly increase economic strength, scientific and technological capabilities, and comprehensive national power; substantially grow GDP per capita to reach that of a mid-level developed country," he said.</p> <p>Chicago-based economic analyst Houze Song observed Beijing was "quietly abandoning its ambition to become the world's largest economy" in Xi's work report at the CCP's 20th National Congress.</p>

The original 2035 target included both measurements. "In contrast, the 20th work report only mentions new milestone for per capita income, not [GDP]," he said.

Song noted the 2035 goal was drafted before China's [2020 census](#) was released in spring 2021. He told *Newsweek*: "I believe there are two main reasons behind abandoning the 2035 GDP target. First, Beijing realized that its population will decline more rapidly than anticipated, which makes it more difficult to achieve high growth."

"Moreover, the GDP target has become less binding in recent years. It was abandoned in 2020, and this year, it seems Beijing doesn't care much about missing the 5.5 percent growth target," said Song, who is a research fellow at the Paulson Institute think tank and author of the MacroPolo Econ Substack.

China's Economy Loses Its Engine

China's once-a-decade census revealed a [declining](#) birth rate and a shrinking workforce. It led to renewed urgency to beat the so-called "middle income trap" of growing old before growing rich.

Births among China's 1.4 billion people—the most in the world—were expected to fall to new [lows](#) in 2022, potentially dipping below 2021's 10.6 million babies, the fewest on record according to official data since the 1950s.

Its working-age population, which peaked in 2014, would decline by some 35 million people by the middle of the present decade, official demographers said. The looming demographic crisis directly concerns the country's medium- to long-term productivity.

Xi addressed the issue over the weekend, telling party delegates that the government would "optimize our population development strategy by establishing a policy system to support birth rates and reduce the costs of childbirth, parenting and education."

Beijing imposed a restrictive one-child policy between 1980 and 2015, before allowing two children, a shift that lasted six years before it expanded to a three-child policy in May 2021.

By July, however, all restrictions were scrapped. In their place, officials introduced incentives including tax deductions, housing subsidies and financial rewards for having more children.

China's Zero-COVID Struggles

Many point to Xi's heavily centralized approach to domestic governance, including his economic policy of propping up state-owned firms, as stifling private sector growth. In recent years, his decision to double down on "[dynamic zero COVID](#)"—his signature public health strategy—has hit productivity, driven small- and medium-sized businesses to closure and raised youth unemployment.

Despite the political pageantry surrounding the party congress, some 200 million people across China were experiencing some form of restricted movement last week—citywide or neighborhood-specific lockdowns, as well as a continuation of the country's mandatory quarantine policy for domestic and international travelers.

There was brief expectation that the rest of China would follow Hong Kong's loosening of COVID regulations in September, given the city's previous tendency to stick to the central government's rhythm.

However, it quickly became clear that zero COVID's strong ideological links to Xi's personal achievements meant the zero-tolerance approach could be framed as nothing but a total success and would need to [remain in place](#) going forward—China's president said as much in his speech.

On Monday, China's National Bureau of Statistics abruptly delayed the release of third-quarter GDP figures and other fiscal data without providing a reason, in a move that would've surprised economists and probably unnerved investors who will look at transparency and regularity as major indicators of confidence in the world's second-largest economy.

China [watchers](#) following Xi's two-hour speech on Sunday noted that he referenced the "economy" 22 times, versus 102 times at the 18th party congress in 2012, when he became CCP general secretary. "Market" was said three times compared to 24 a decade ago, while "security" rose from 36 to 50 mentions. Previous annual growth rates in China underpinned the economic forecast that justified the original 2035 target, but Beijing also faces more immediate policy decisions ahead, said Philip Hsu, a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution think tank's Center for East Asia Policy Studies.

"Apparently China's economy is not in good shape and is likely to remain so perhaps at least until the second half next year. I think this is among the main reasons why the target of doubled national GDP by 2035 is no longer mentioned in the work report this time," he told *Newsweek*.

"The delay in releasing the Q3 data which can be expected to look mediocre at best is probably an attempt to avert disgracing the Party Congress.

"My guess is that both Xi and [Chinese Premier] Li Keqiang understand that as far as the most crucial problem of economic slowdown—structural pathology of the property sector—remains unresolved sufficiently, it'll be difficult to return to the growth rate years ago," said Hsu, who is also director of the Center for China Studies at National Taiwan University.

"The policy of zero COVID adds to, but is not the leading factor of, the slowdown. Rapidly declining consumption and investment that result chiefly from the zero-COVID policy are relatively easy to bounce back from once the policy is relaxed to a certain extent," he said.

"But of course Xi's assertion in the Party Congress that the zero-COVID policy is to be [continued](#) cannot be trivialized. Whereas local governments have attempted various measures to inject credit into the property sector, confidence and price have not improved much, and it is questionable for how long the injection can be sustained given the rapidly growing local debts almost everywhere in China," Hsu noted.

China's Semiconductor Uncertainty

Separately, Beijing is also yet to formally respond to the Commerce Department October 14 announcement of semiconductor export restrictions to China, a blacklist that cuts off Chinese firms from high-end American chip technology.

Jake Sullivan, the national security adviser, said the restrictions were "premised on straightforward national security concerns."

"These technologies are used to develop and field advanced military systems including weapons of mass destruction, [hypersonic missiles](#), autonomous systems and mass surveillance," he said.

It was still unclear whether the Chinese statistics bureau's decision to delay its quarterly report was related to the new U.S. measures, which were announced on the eve of the national congress.

While the full ramifications of the sanctions won't emerge for some time—exporters have been allowed a grace period to get their affairs in order—there already were early signs of disruption.

Unique to the latest round of export controls was its impact not only on hardware, but on human capital, too. U.S. citizens or green card holders must apply for a Commerce Department license in order to work for Chinese chip plants, or face prosecution by the Justice Department.

The restrictions are expected to cause an exodus of U.S. talent from an industry key to China's long-term ambitions to lead in science and technology. Beijing warned high-tech decoupling was likely to hit American businesses just as hard.

HEADLINE	10/19 TSA new cyber rules for railroad carriers
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/federal-pages/dhs/tsa-issues-new-cybersecurity-requirements-for-passenger-and-freight-railroad-carriers/
GIST	<p>The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has announced a new cybersecurity security directive regulating designated passenger and freight railroad carriers. Building on the TSA’s work to strengthen defenses in other transportation modes, this security directive will further enhance cybersecurity preparedness and resilience for the nation’s railroad operations.</p> <p>Developed with extensive input from industry stakeholders and federal partners, including the Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and the Department of Transportation’s Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), this Enhancing Rail Cybersecurity – SD 1580/82-2022-01 directive strengthens cybersecurity requirements and focuses on performance-based measures to achieve critical cybersecurity outcomes.</p> <p>“The nation’s railroads have a long track record of forward-looking efforts to secure their network against cyber threats and have worked hard over the past year to build additional resilience, and this directive, which is focused on performance-based measures, will further these efforts to protect critical transportation infrastructure from attack,” said TSA Administrator David Pekoske. “We are encouraged by the significant collaboration between TSA, FRA, CISA and the railroad industry in the development of this security directive.</p> <p>The security directive requires that TSA-specified passenger and freight railroad carriers take action to prevent disruption and degradation to their infrastructure to achieve the following critical security outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop network segmentation policies and controls to ensure that the Operational Technology system can continue to safely operate in the event that an Information Technology system has been compromised and vice versa; 2. Create access control measures to secure and prevent unauthorized access to critical cyber systems; 3. Build continuous monitoring and detection policies and procedures to detect cybersecurity threats and correct anomalies that affect critical cyber system operations; and 4. Reduce the risk of exploitation of unpatched systems through the application of security patches and updates for operating systems, applications, drivers, and firmware on critical cyber systems in a timely manner using a risk-based methodology. <p>Passenger and freight railroad carriers are required to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish and execute a TSA-approved Cybersecurity Implementation Plan that describes the specific cybersecurity measures the passenger and freight rail carriers are utilizing to achieve the security outcomes set forth in the security directive. 2. Establish a Cybersecurity Assessment Program to proactively test and regularly audit the effectiveness of cybersecurity measures and identify and resolve vulnerabilities within devices, networks, and systems. <p>This is the latest in TSA’s performance-based security directives; previous security directives include requirements such as reporting significant cybersecurity incidents to CISA, establishing a cybersecurity point of contact, developing and adopting a cybersecurity incident response plan, and completing a cybersecurity vulnerability assessment.</p> <p>TSA also intends to begin a rulemaking process, which would establish regulatory requirements for the rail sector following a public comment period.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/19 Airport GPS interference stumps FAA
SOURCE	https://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2022/10/cause-is-unknown-for-mysterious-gps-outage-that-rerouted-texas-air-traffic/
GIST	<p>The Federal Aviation Administration is investigating the cause of mysterious GPS interference that, over the past few days, has closed one runway at the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport and prompted some aircraft in the region to be rerouted to areas where signals were working properly.</p> <p>The interference first came to light on Monday afternoon when the FAA issued an advisory over ATIS (Automatic Terminal Information Service). It warned flight personnel and air traffic controllers of GPS interference over a 40-mile swath of airspace near the Dallas-Fort Worth airport. The advisory read in part: “ATTN ALL AIRCRAFT. GPS REPORTED UNRELIABLE WITHIN 40 NM OF DFW.”</p> <p>A dramatic impact</p> <p>An advisory issued around the same time by the Air Traffic Control System Command Center, meanwhile, reported the region was "experiencing GPS anomalies that are dramatically impacting" flights in and out of Dallas-Fort Worth and neighboring airports. It went on to say that some of the airports were relying on the use of navigation systems that predated GPS.</p> <p>Gpsjam.org, a website that monitors GPS interference in real time, published this map that showed the specific areas where aircraft were reporting unreliable GPS.</p> <p>John Wiseman, the operator of GPSjam.org, said on Twitter that the interference appeared to begin around 1 pm local time and ramped up over the next several hours. He provided a time-lapse video that illustrates what he was talking about.</p> <p>A day later, Wiseman reported that not only was the interference continuing, but that aircraft on the ground in the affected region were also unable to receive reliable GPS readings. What’s more, fine-grained tracking of the interference suggested that military operations—the most common source of unintentional interference—weren’t playing a role. Several hours later, the unexplained problems not only continued but had spread to areas near Waco.</p> <p>As mysteriously as it began, it stops</p> <p>Then, around 11 pm Dallas time, the interference ended. As mysteriously as the interference began, it had stopped. In an online interview, Wiseman wrote:</p> <p><i>This GPS interference stood out because it was significant, covered a relatively large area, and didn't look like the typical interference I see in the United States which is almost always clearly associated with military testing or training in a military operating area. My understanding is that lack of GPS isn't an emergency for aircraft, but it can definitely be annoying and lead to delays and even canceled flights. I don't know what caused this interference or whether it was intentional, but it almost certainly came from a piece of electronic equipment and not a natural phenomenon. GPS is kind of a weird piece of the world's infrastructure in that it's so important, but also very easy to break through intentional or accidental jamming. I hope it continues to stay usable!</i></p> <p>Civilian GPS relies on low-power satellite signals broadcast in the L band, a radio frequency range that’s also used by civilian terrestrial radio sources, including 5G mobile devices. That makes GPS susceptible to unintentional interference from the rollout of this next-generation technology. Equipment used on military bases is also a frequent cause.</p> <p>Typically, however, when unintentional interference occurs, authorities can pinpoint the cause within a few hours. On Wednesday, FAA officials said in a statement: “The FAA is looking into reports of issues with GPS-guided approaches for one of Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport runways. The agency has found no evidence of intentional interference and is working to identify the cause. Aircraft are able to land safely on other runways.”</p> <p>With no known cause, experts can only speculate.</p>

“We don’t know if there are malicious actors behind this incident, or if it’s a result of interference,” Josh Lospinoso, co-founder and CEO of aircraft and transportation security company Shift5 and a former US Cyber Command official, said in an interview. “Interference is a timely issue for airports and airlines right now. There was a big push by wireless carriers to roll out 5G in airports a few months ago that was a terrible idea from the perspective of how many legacy devices in aircraft rely on the wireless bands that are impeded by 5G.”

Lospinoso also noted the susceptibility civilian GPS to intentional spoofing and jamming. North Korea used GPS jamming [in 2012](#). Three years ago, the Center for Advanced Defense Studies reported that Russia had [performed extensive spoofing](#) of signals used by GPS and other Global Navigation Satellite Systems in Syria and other combat zones.

Other forms of aircraft navigation are similarly vulnerable. In 2012, for instance, researcher Brad Haines reported that he was able to [spoof the ADS-B signals](#) a surveillance technology aircraft rely on to determine their position via satellite navigation. The researcher demonstrated how attackers could use these spoofed signals to create “ghost planes” that would appear on air traffic controllers' screens. Researchers have also devised a low-cost hack that [spoofs the instrument landing systems](#) that planes rely on to safely land.

This week’s event appears similar to one that, [according to GPSWorld](#), played out in Denver last January. In the January episode, aircraft in a 50-nautical-mile swath of airspace around the airport reported unreliable GPS for more than 33 hours.

Readers should know that GPS interference isn’t life-threatening. But as noted, episodes like these do cause cancellations, delays, and other inconveniences. More importantly, they underscore the frailty of a system that the world is growing increasingly reliant on. More concerning than the interference itself is the mystery as to what caused it.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/20 Malicious apps 20M downloads Play Store
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2022/10/these-16-clicker-malware-infected.html
GIST	<p>As many as 16 malicious apps with over 20 million cumulative downloads have been taken down from the Google Play Store after they were caught committing mobile ad fraud.</p> <p>The Clicker malware masqueraded as seemingly harmless utilities like cameras, currency/unit converters, QR code readers, note-taking apps, and dictionaries, among others, in a bid to trick users into downloading them, cybersecurity firm McAfee said.</p> <p>The list of offending apps is as follows -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-Speed Camera (com.hantor.CozyCamera) - 10,000,000+ downloads • Smart Task Manager (com.james.SmartTaskManager) - 5,000,000+ downloads • Flashlight+ (kr.caramel.flash_plus) - 1,000,000+ downloads • 달력메모장 (com.smh.memocalendar) - 1,000,000+ downloads • K-Dictionary (com.joysoft.wordBook) - 1,000,000+ downloads • BusanBus (com.kmshack.BusanBus) - 1,000,000+ downloads • Flashlight+ (com.candlencom.candleprotest) - 500,000+ downloads • Quick Note (com.movinapp.quicknote) - 500,000+ downloads • Currency Converter (com.smartwho.SmartCurrencyConverter) - 500,000+ downloads • Joycode (com.joysoft.barcode) - 100,000+ downloads • EzDica (com.joysoft.ezdica) - 100,000+ downloads • Instagram Profile Downloader (com.schedulezero.instapp) - 100,000+ downloads • Ez Notes (com.meek.tingboard) - 100,000+ downloads • 손전등 (com.candlencom.flashlite) - 1,000+ downloads

- 계산기 (com.doubleline.calcul) - 100+ downloads
- Flashlight+ (com.dev.imagevault) - 100+ downloads

The Clicker app, once installed and launched, unleashes its fraudulent functionality that enables the malware to covertly visit bogus websites and simulate ad clicks without the victims' knowledge.

"This may cause heavy network traffic and consume power without user awareness during the time it generates profit for the threat actor behind this malware," McAfee researcher SangRyol Ryu said.

To further conceal its true motive, the app takes into account the app's installation time such that the suspicious activity doesn't kick in within the first one hour of downloading the app. It also incorporates a randomized delay in between to stay under the radar.

The findings arrive two months after McAfee discovered a dozen Android adware apps distributed on the Google Play Store, which harbored a malware strain called [HiddenAds](#) that were found to execute automatically without any user interaction.

"Clicker malware targets illicit advertising revenue and can disrupt the mobile advertising ecosystem," Ryu said. "Malicious behavior is cleverly hidden from detection."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/19 Microsoft data breach exposes contact info
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/microsoft-data-breach-exposes-customers-contact-info-emails/
GIST	<p>Microsoft said today that some of its customers' sensitive information was exposed by a misconfigured Microsoft server accessible over the Internet.</p> <p>The company secured the server after being notified of the leak on September 24, 2022 by security researchers at threat intelligence firm SOCRadar.</p> <p>"This misconfiguration resulted in the potential for unauthenticated access to some business transaction data corresponding to interactions between Microsoft and prospective customers, such as the planning or potential implementation and provisioning of Microsoft services," the company revealed.</p> <p>"Our investigation found no indication customer accounts or systems were compromised. We have directly notified the affected customers."</p> <p>According to Microsoft, the exposed information includes names, email addresses, email content, company name, and phone numbers, as well as files linked to business between affected customers and Microsoft or an authorized Microsoft partner.</p> <p>Redmond added that the leak was caused by the "unintentional misconfiguration on an endpoint that is not in use across the Microsoft ecosystem" and not due to a security vulnerability.</p> <p>Leaked data allegedly linked to 65,000 entities worldwide</p> <p>While Microsoft refrained from providing any additional details regarding this data leak, SOCRadar revealed in a blog post published today that the data was stored on misconfigured Azure Blob Storage.</p> <p>In total, SOCRadar claims it was able to link this sensitive information to more than 65,000 entities from 111 countries stored in files dated from 2017 to August 2022.</p> <p>"On September 24, 2022, SOCRadar's built-in Cloud Security Module detected a misconfigured Azure Blob Storage maintained by Microsoft containing sensitive data from a high-profile cloud provider," SOCRadar said.</p>

The threat intel company added that, from its analysis, the leaked data "includes Proof-of-Execution (PoE) and Statement of Work (SoW) documents, user information, product orders/offers, project details, PII (Personally Identifiable Information) data, and documents that may reveal intellectual property."

Microsoft added today that it believes SOCRadar "greatly exaggerated the scope of this issue" and "the numbers."

Furthermore, Redmond said that SOCRadar's decision to collect the data and make it searchable using a dedicated search portal "is not in the best interest of ensuring customer privacy or security and potentially exposing them to unnecessary risk."

Online tool to search the leaked data

SOCRadar's data leak search portal is named [BlueBleed](#) and it allows companies to find if their sensitive info was also exposed with the leaked data.

Besides what was found inside Microsoft's misconfigured server, BlueBleed also allows searching for data collected from five other public storage buckets.

In Microsoft's server alone, SOCRadar claims to have found 2.4 TB of data containing sensitive information, with more than 335,000 emails, 133,000 projects, and 548,000 exposed users discovered while analyzing the leaked files until now.

Per SOCRadar's analysis, these files contain customer emails, SOW documents, product offers, POC (Proof of Concept) works, partner ecosystem details, invoices, project details, customer product price list, POE documents, product orders, signed customer documents, internal comments for customers, sales strategies, and customer asset documents.

"Threat actors who may have accessed the bucket may use this information in different forms for extortion, blackmailing, creating social engineering tactics with the help of exposed information, or simply selling the information to the highest bidder on the dark web and Telegram channels," SOCRadar warned.

A SOCRadar spokesperson was not immediately available for comment when contacted by BleepingComputer earlier today.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/20 New version 'FurBall' Android spyware
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hacking-group-updates-furball-android-spyware-to-evade-detection/
GIST	<p>A new version of the 'FurBall' Android spyware has been found targeting Iranian citizens in mobile surveillance campaigns conducted by the Domestic Kitten hacking group, also known as APT-C-50.</p> <p>The spyware is deployed in a mass-surveillance operation that has been underway since at least 2016. In addition, multiple cybersecurity firms have reported on Domestic Kitten, which they believe is an Iranian state-sponsored hacking group.</p> <p>The newest FurBall malware version was sampled and analyzed by ESET researchers, who report it has many similarities with earlier versions, but now comes with obfuscation and C2 updates.</p> <p>Also, this discovery confirms that 'Domestic Kitten' is still ongoing in its sixth year, which further backs the hypothesis that the operators are tied to the Iranian regime, enjoying immunity from law enforcement.</p> <p>New FurBall details</p> <p>The new version of FurBall is distributed via fake websites that are visually clones of real ones, where victims end up after direct messages, social media posts, emails, SMS, black SEO, and SEO poisoning.</p>

In one case spotted by ESET, the malware is hosted on a fake website mimicking an English-to-Persian translation service popular in the country.

In the fake version, there's a Google Play button that supposedly lets users download an Android version of the translator, but instead of landing on the app store, they are sent an APK file named 'sarayemaghale.apk'.

Depending on what permissions are defined in the Android app's AndroidManifest.xml file, the spyware is capable of stealing the following information:

- Clipboard contents
- Device location
- SMS messages
- Contact list
- Call logs
- Record calls
- Content of notifications
- Installed and running apps
- Device info

However, ESET says that the sample it analyzed has limited functionality, only requesting access to contacts and storage media.

These permissions are still powerful if abused, and at the same time, won't raise suspicions to the targets, which is likely why the hacking group restricted FurBall's potential.

If needed, the malware can receive commands to execute directly from its command and control (C2) server, which is contacted via an HTTP request every 10 seconds.

In terms of the new obfuscation layer, ESET says it includes class names, strings, logs, and server URI paths, attempting to evade detection from anti-virus tools.

Previous versions of Furball didn't feature any obfuscation at all. Hence, VirusTotal detects the malware on four AV engines, whereas previously, it was flagged by 28 products.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/20 Millions of .git folders exposed to public
SOURCE	https://securityaffairs.co/wordpress/137371/security/millions-git-folders-exposed-public.html?web_view=true
GIST	<p>Git is the most popular open-source, distributed version control system (VCS) developed nearly 20 years ago by Linus Torvalds for development of the Linux kernel, with other kernel developers contributing to its initial development. It allows to coordinate work among programmers developing source code and allows tracking of changes.</p> <p>A .git folder contains essential information about projects, such as remote repository addresses, commit history logs, and other essential metadata. Leaving this data in open access can lead to breaches and system exposure.</p> <p>For example, another recent research by Cybernews discovered that CarbonTV, a US-based streaming service, left a server with its source code open, risking user safety and the company's reputation. The source code was leaking due to poor control of access to the .git folder.</p> <p>Researchers at Cybernews on most common web service ports 80 and 443 revealed 1,931,148 IP addresses with live servers that had .git folder structure accessible to the public.</p> <p><i>"Having public access to the .git folder could lead to the exposure of the source code. Tools required to get parts or full source code from the .git folder are free and well-known, which could lead to many more</i></p>

internal leaks or easier access to the system for a malicious actor,” Martynas Vareikis, a researcher at Cybernews, said.

Over 31% of publicly exposed .git folders are located in the US, followed by China (8%) and Germany (6.5%).

Around 6.3% of exposed .git configuration files had their deployment credentials in the configuration file itself.

“Credential leaks are even worse. Threat actors could use them to view/access/pull/push all repositories, opening up even more opportunities for a malicious actor, such as planting malicious ads, changing content, and credit card skimming. Possibilities are endless when you have full access,” Vareikis warned.

He said developers need to make use of the .gitignore file, telling Git which files to ignore when committing a project to [the GitHub repository](#). In general, it’s never a good idea to commit anything sensitive, even to private repositories.

CyberNews experts noticed that it is still a common practice to leave publicly exposed web servers accessible via IPs. [Domain names](#), such as cybernews.com, are designed for users to remember and access them easily, but they function as aliases for IP addresses expressed in a sequence of numbers. Focused on protecting the main domain address used by the public, developers often forget to set the same access control rules to corresponding IP addresses, which could result in threat actors modifying the domain and configuring access rules, among other things.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/18 WeChat midterm elections misinformation
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/chinese-american-misinformation-midterm-elections-wechat/
GIST	<p>“I’M AN ENGINEER; I like facts: one is one, zero is zero,” says More Less, the online pseudonym of a Silicon Valley-based software engineer from China. “I think it’s my responsibility to rebut this nonsense.”</p> <p>More Less asked not to be identified by his real name because his posts might attract harassment. His Chinese-language fact-checking blog is part of a grassroots movement fighting political misinformation spread by US users of Chinese-language social media, such as Weibo and WeChat. His recent posts have taken on claims that California Democrats made it legal to shoplift up to \$950 in goods or that widespread voter fraud distorted the 2020 presidential election.</p> <p>With the US midterm elections two weeks away, More Less and other activists tracking misinformation in Chinese American communities worry that posts stoking racial tensions or casting doubt on the integrity of elections could sway close races—or cause people to abstain from voting.</p> <p>Messaging app WeChat is seen as one of the main venues for Chinese-language misinformation in the US. The version offered in China, known as Weixin, is hugely influential and used for far more than chatting, with functions including hailing taxis and storing Covid vaccination codes. The US version has limited capabilities and a lower profile, aside from being the target of an attempted ban by then president Donald Trump in 2020. But WeChat is used by millions of Chinese Americans and people with friends, family, or business in China, including as a political organizing tool. In 2022, WeChat groups played a role in the recall of members of San Francisco’s school board, and New York City officials’ decision to pause plans to scrap testing requirements for some public high schools.</p> <p>A recent visit to a Chinese-language WeChat group for New Yorkers by WIRED revealed a parade of dubious health advice and earwax cures, and posts describing violence against Asians across the US. Popular posts, generally from individuals or small outlets with names that translate to things like “Overseas Chinese Web,” often pull from English-language news reports, layering on an urgent and sensational style.</p>

Within China, Weixin is subject to Chinese government censorship, and WeChat's US acceptable use policy forbids misinformation and inappropriate content, and bans ads or sponsored content on political issues. But people tracking misinformation say that the platform is largely unmoderated in the US. WeChat's parent company, Tencent, declined to respond to questions about misinformation spreading among US users.

"We only get the garbage. Nobody is cleaning it up," says Jin Xia Niu, Chinese digital engagement program manager at nonprofit Chinese for Affirmative Action. In June, the San Francisco organization launched a Chinese-language fact-checking initiative called PiYaoBa, which posts articles to its website and public WeChat accounts that are written in a similar style to fact-checking organizations such as Snopes and FactCheck.org.

Whether sites like those are significantly slowing misinformation is debatable, but Niu and others working on Chinese-language content face distinct challenges. Many WeChat posts appear on private channels, which can have up to 500 members, and even public channels, which anyone can view, are hard to track because posts are not crawled by Google or indexed by social media monitoring services like Meta-owned CrowdTangle.

When Chinese-language misinformation appears on US platforms like YouTube or Facebook, activists say it seems to get less actively moderated than English content, a pattern that has also been documented for other communities in the US that use languages other than English, particularly Spanish. Although Meta and Twitter have both announced efforts to label misleading information in other languages, reports by whistleblowers and in the media suggest, moderation falls short in languages other than English. Elena Hernandez, a spokesperson for YouTube, says the platform's moderation teams include people with Mandarin and Cantonese expertise. Meta did not respond to a request for comment; Twitter did not comment.

Individuals like More Less, and small grassroots groups, aim to fill in the gaps but have limited resources. More established nonprofits bring heft but often promote liberal causes and can be seen as partisan and biased. Unlike for those working against misinformation distributed in English, there isn't a ready supply of reporting from trustworthy news sites, fact-checking pages, or government publications to point people to. Non-English publications in the US, which often serve specific ethnic groups, generally don't have the staff to cover politics in depth.

Misleading political posts in Chinese come from a variety of sources and include viewpoints from the left and right—although researchers report a sharp rise in far-right content since 2020. Well-funded media outlets affiliated with the US far right, such as the GTV Media Group and Epoch Media Group, produce original but hyperpartisan content in Chinese. Other accounts that share misinformation appear to be aimed at monetizing clicks by translating the kind of extreme content that also goes viral in English.

On YouTube, self-styled newscasters have become a core news source for some Chinese speakers in the US, offering political hot takes that often slide into misinformation, says Jenny L., who helps track disinformation and misinformation for [Asian Americans Advancing Justice](#) - AAJC, a nonprofit in Washington, DC. She asked that her last name be withheld to avoid online harassment. "It's pretty easy for them to skirt the minimal moderation YouTube has in place for non-English content," she says, including by avoiding certain words or using slang terms—for instance a word that sounds like the second character in the Mandarin word for vaccine.

None of the activists WIRED spoke to saw evidence of Chinese government involvement in spreading election misinformation—although the blogger More Less pointed out that some nationalists in China welcome anything that weakens US democracy.

Much like in English, Donald Trump currently dominates much of the US conversation on Chinese-language platforms about politics and the upcoming midterm elections. At a media briefing in September, CAA, the Mental Health Association for Chinese Communities, and APIAVote, a group

that tries to involve Asian American and Pacific Islander communities in the political process, warned about trending falsehoods.

They included a story circulating on public WeChat channels that claimed the FBI raid to retrieve government documents from Trump's home in Florida was orchestrated by the Biden administration to help Democrats in the midterms. Some posts had a uniquely Chinese take, comparing the FBI search to unauthorized raids on homes during China's Cultural Revolution. In response, PiYaoBa published an article in Chinese offering [detailed context](#), corrections to the false information, and links to reliable sources, albeit all in English.

People trying to fight Chinese-language misinformation describe a generation gap in internet use by first- and second-generation immigrants. Chinese-speakers who moved to the US as adults are more likely to rely on Chinese platforms such as WeChat to get their news and can be less familiar with the political and education system, making them less able to see through misinformation.

Grace Xu, a volunteer with [No Melon](#), a Chinese-language fact-checking group, says that in recent years many misleading posts have preyed on the fears of first-generation immigrants—including concerns over candidates whose policies sound too much like communism—or have aimed to pit Asian Americans against other minorities. “They’re optimizing toward emotions,” she says, which can make reasoned rebuttals ineffective. Some Chinese Americans feel that US politicians have not done enough to address the jump in violence against Asian Americans that began during the pandemic. That sense of being overlooked fosters distrust that can help misinformation spread.

Activists trying to clean up Chinese-language digital spaces are turning to technology to sift through the flood of questionable content and monitor the effectiveness of their interventions. CAA, for example, uses a service called [Critical Mention](#) to watch for English-language misinformation that might spill over into Chinese.

The group is also working with Meedan, a nonprofit that develops digital tools to help fight misinformation. Meedan recently received funding from the US National Science Foundation to [develop tools](#) powered by machine learning to help Asian American and Pacific Islander communities look for phrases and topics associated with misinformation across different languages and platforms.

Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC uses a collaborative social media monitoring tool, called [Junkipedia](#), that pulls data about accounts and terms that have been flagged as problematic. Approved organizations can use that information to write and annotate reports—contributing to a Wikipedia-style database of misleading content.

As the midterm elections near, CAA's Niu says she is seeing more misinformation, spreading on more platforms, than in previous election cycles. “I’m extremely worried,” she says, but she also sees reason for hope. “I do feel we’re making some progress. We know who the key players are, and we’re more prepared.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/19 MultiCare system reveals security breach
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article267522778.html
GIST	<p>While CommonSpirit Health's ransomware attack has been dominating local news cycles, another local health care provider recently revealed its own security breach — this one affecting employees.</p> <p>In an announcement posted on its website Oct. 12, Tacoma-based MultiCare Health System revealed that it was part of a security incident that targeted Kaye-Smith, a third-party entity that prints W-2 and 1099 forms for the health system.</p> <p>“In early June 2022, Kaye-Smith confirmed that they were subject to a ransomware attack involving several of their customers including MultiCare,” the release said. “The names, addresses and Social</p>

Security numbers for a number of current and former MultiCare employees were included in the data acquired without authorization.”

It added that “MultiCare was officially informed that the breach included its employees’ information on Sept. 30, 2022.”

According to the health system, Kaye-Smith re-secured the data “and instituted a monitoring program to search for any exposure of the data”

It added that there was no evidence so far “that any of the data was or will be made available to the public.”

This week, letters were being sent to affected workers and former employees.

“Impacted employees will be offered two years of free credit monitoring and protection through Equifax Credit Watch Gold,” the health system said.

MultiCare was not alone in Kaye-Smith’s data breach.

Becker’s Hospital Review reported this week that patients and employees with five other health systems were listed in the same breach, including 3,800 individuals from Seattle-based UW Medicine and 6,750 individuals from Seattle Children’s, as well as 31,573 individuals from Boise-based St. Luke’s Health System.

Delta Dental also has been affected, and individual company announcements posted online show entities such as World Vision and Nations Lending Corp. also are part of the Kaye-Smith breach list.

Separately, CommonSpirit Health announced this week that its Virginia Mason Franciscan Health sites in the Puget Sound region were slowly coming back online and regaining access to their online medical network and records after a multi-week outage. The outage was the result of steps taken by CommonSpirit Health in a ransomware attack first announced as an IT security incident Oct. 3.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/20 Medibank’s health data held for ransom
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/hacker-holds-australian-health-insurers-data-ransom-91782792
GIST	<p>CANBERRA, Australia -- A cybercriminal was holding for ransom an Australian health insurer’s customer data including diagnoses and treatments, in the nation’s second major privacy breach in a month, officials said on Thursday.</p> <p>Trade in Medibank shares has been halted on the Australian Securities Exchange since Wednesday when police were alerted that the company had been contacted by what it described as a “criminal” who wanted to negotiate over the stolen personal data of customers.</p> <p>Medibank, which has 3.7 million customers, said on Thursday the criminal had provided a sample of 100 customer policies from a purported haul of 200 gigabytes of stolen data.</p> <p>Details included customer names, addresses, birth dates, national health care identification numbers and phone numbers.</p> <p>Cybersecurity Minister Clare O’Neil said most concerning was that records of medical diagnoses and procedures had also been stolen.</p> <p>“Financial crime is a terrible thing. But ultimately, a credit card can be replaced,” O’Neil told reporters.</p> <p>“The threat that is being made here to make the private, personal health information of Australians made available to the public is a dog act,” she added.</p>

The Medibank breach, which O’Neil described as a “ransomware attack,” came a month after a cyberattack stole from telecommunications company Optus the personal data of 9.8 million customers.

The Optus breach, which compromised the personal data of more than one-third of Australia’s population, prompted the government to propose urgent reforms to privacy laws that would increase penalties for companies that fail to protect customers’ data and limit the quantity of data that can be retained.

O’Neil said cybercrime was a growing problem around the world and that Australia needed to be better prepared.

“We are going to be under relentless cyberattack essentially from here on in, and what it means is that we need to do a lot better as a country to make sure that we are doing everything we can within organizations to protect customer data and also for citizens to be doing everything that they can,” O’Neil told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

“Combined with Optus, this is a huge wake-up call for the country and certainly gives the government a really clear mandate to do some things that frankly probably should have been done five years ago, but I think are still very crucially important,” she added, referring to privacy law reforms that the government hopes to pass through Parliament this year.

Medibank chief executive David Koczkar said his company was working with specialized cybersecurity firms as well as police and government experts in response to the breach.

“I unreservedly apologise for this crime which has been perpetrated against our customers, our people and the broader community,” Koczkar said in a statement.

“I know that many will be disappointed with Medibank and I acknowledge that disappointment,” he added.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/19 Poor, less white areas worst internet deals
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/poor-white-areas-worst-internet-deals-91728448
GIST	<p>A couple of years into the pandemic, Shirley Neville had finally had enough of her shoddy internet service.</p> <p>“It was just a headache,” said Neville, who lives in a middle-class neighborhood in New Orleans whose residents are almost all Black or Latino. “When I was getting ready to use my tablet for a meeting, it was cutting off and not coming on.”</p> <p>Neville said she was willing to pay more to be able to Zoom without interruption, so she called AT&T to upgrade her connection. She said she was told there was nothing the company could do.</p> <p>In her area, AT&T only offers download speeds of 1 megabit per second or less, trapping her in a digital Stone Age. Her internet is so slow that it doesn’t meet Zoom’s recommended minimum for group video calls; doesn’t come close to the Federal Communications Commission’s definition of broadband, currently 25 Mbps; and is worlds below median home internet speeds in the U.S., which average 167 Mbps.</p> <p>“In my neighborhood, it’s terrible,” Neville said.</p> <p>But that’s not the case in other parts of New Orleans. AT&T offers residents of the mostly white, upper-income neighborhood of Lakeview internet speeds almost 400 times faster than Neville’s—for the same price: \$55 a month.</p> <p>The Markup gathered and analyzed more than 800,000 internet service offers from AT&T, Verizon, Earthlink, and CenturyLink in 38 cities across America and found that all four routinely offered fast base</p>

speeds at or above 200 Mbps in some neighborhoods for the same price as connections below 25 Mbps in others.

The neighborhoods offered the worst deals had lower median incomes in nine out of 10 cities in the analysis. In two-thirds of the cities where The Markup had enough data to compare, the providers gave the worst offers to the least white neighborhoods.

These providers also disproportionately gave the worst offers to formerly redlined areas in every one of the 22 cities examined where digitized historical maps were available. These are areas a since-disbanded agency created by the federal government in the 1930s had deemed “hazardous” for financial institutions to invest in, often because the residents were Black or poor. Redlining was outlawed in 1968.

By failing to price according to service speed, these companies are demanding some customers pay dramatically higher unit prices for advertised download speed than others. CenturyLink, which showed the most extreme disparities, offered some customers service of 200 Mbps, amounting to as little as \$0.25 per Mbps, but offered others living in the same city only 0.5 Mbps for the same price—a unit price of \$100 per Mbps, or 400 times as much.

Residents of neighborhoods offered the worst deals aren’t just being ripped off; they’re denied the ability to participate in remote learning, well-paying remote jobs, and even family connection and recreation—ubiquitous elements of modern life.

“It isn’t just about the provision of a better service. It’s about access to the tools people need to fully participate in our democratic system,” said Chad Marlow, senior policy counsel at the ACLU. “That is a far bigger deal and that’s what really worries me about what you’re finding.”

Christopher Lewis, president and CEO of the nonprofit Public Knowledge, which works to expand internet access, said The Markup’s analysis shows how far behind the federal government is when it comes to holding internet providers to account. “Nowhere have we seen either the FCC nor the Congress, who ultimately has authority as well, study competition in the marketplace and pricing to see if consumers are being price gouged or if those service offerings make sense.”

None of the providers denied charging the same fee for vastly different internet speeds to different neighborhoods in the same cities. But they said their intentions were not to discriminate against communities of color and that there were other factors to consider.

The industry group USTelecom, speaking on behalf of Verizon, said the cost of maintaining the antiquated equipment used for slow speed service plays a role in its price.

“Fiber can be hundreds of times faster than legacy broadband—but that doesn’t mean that legacy networks cost hundreds of times less,” USTelecom senior vice president Marie Johnson said in an email. “Operating and maintaining legacy technologies can be more expensive, especially as legacy network components are discontinued by equipment manufacturers.”

AT&T spokesperson Jim Greer said in an emailed statement that The Markup’s analysis is “fundamentally flawed” because it “clearly ignored our participation in the federal Affordable Connectivity Program and our low-cost Access by AT&T service offerings.” The Affordable Connectivity Program was launched in 2021 and pays up to \$30 a month for internet for low-income residents, or \$75 on tribal lands.

“Any suggestion that we discriminate in providing internet access is blatantly wrong,” he said, adding that AT&T plans on spending \$48 billion on service upgrades over the next two years.

Recent research looking at 30 major cities found only about a third of eligible households had signed up for the federal subsidy, however, and the majority use it to help cover cellphone bills, which also qualify, rather than home internet costs. Connectivity advocates told The Markup that it’s hard to get people to jump through the bureaucratic hoops needed to sign up for the program when service is slow.

Greer declined to say how many or what percentage of AT&T's internet customers are signed up for either the ACP or the company's own low-cost program for low-income residents.

In a letter to the FCC, AT&T insisted its high-speed internet deployments are driven by "household density, not median incomes." But when The Markup ran a statistical test controlling for density, it still found AT&T disproportionately offered slower speeds to lower-income areas in three out of four of the 20 cities where it investigated their service.

"We do not engage in discriminatory practices like redlining and find the accusation offensive," Mark Molzen, a spokesperson for CenturyLink's parent company, Lumen, wrote in an email." He said that The Markup's analysis is "deeply flawed" without specifying how. He did not respond to requests for clarification.

EarthLink, which doesn't own internet infrastructure in the examined cities but rather rents capacity from other providers, did not provide an official comment despite repeated requests.

Internet prices are not regulated by the federal government because unlike telephone service, internet service is not considered a utility. As a result, providers can make their own decisions about where they provide service and how much to charge. The FCC declined a request to comment on the findings.

The investigation is based on service offers collected from the companies' own websites, which contain service lookup tools that list all available plans for specific addresses, using a method pioneered by researchers at Princeton University. The Markup analyzed price and speed for nearly 850,000 offers for addresses in the largest city in 38 states where these providers operate.

Las Vegas is one city where large swaths of CenturyLink's offers were for slow service. Almost half didn't meet the current federal definition of broadband. These fell disproportionately on Las Vegas's lower-income and least white areas.

Las Vegas councilwoman Olivia Diaz said that in the summer of 2020, she approached families where children had stopped showing up to virtual lessons the previous school year to find out what went wrong.

City schools were preparing to begin their second school year marked by COVID-19 lockdowns.

"We kept hearing there were multiple children trying to connect in the household, but they weren't able to," said Diaz, who represents a district that's predominantly Latino and on the lower end of the city's income spectrum.

More than 80% of CenturyLink's internet offers in her district were for service slower than 25 Mbps. Education advocacy group Common Sense Media recommends at least 200 Mbps download speeds for a household to reliably conduct multiple, simultaneous video conferencing sessions.

"I think it's unfair knowing that it is slow service that we're paying for that is not commensurate with the faster speeds that they have in the other parts of the city that are paying the same price," Diaz said. "It just breaks my heart to know we're not getting the best bang for our buck."

Diaz said city officials have asked CenturyLink to expand high-speed service in her district, but the company declined, citing the prohibitive cost of deploying new infrastructure in the area. CenturyLink did not respond to emails asking about this request.

Some officials told The Markup they've been yelling for years about bad service for high prices.

"If I was paying \$6 a month," Joshua Edmonds, Detroit's director of digital inclusion, "well you get what you're paying for." But he objects to people being asked to pay premium rates for bad service. "What I pay versus what I get doesn't really make sense."

In a 2018 report, Bill Callahan, who runs the online accessibility organization Connect Your Community, coined the term “tier flattening” to describe charging internet customers the same rate for differing levels of service. He said The Markup’s findings show how much of America’s internet market is based on the “basic unfairness” of internet service providers deciding to deprioritize investing in new, high-speed infrastructure in marginalized areas.

“They’ve made a decision that those neighborhoods are going to be treated differently,” said Callahan. “The core reason for that is they think they don’t have enough money in those neighborhoods to sustain the kind of market they want.”

The FCC is currently drafting rules under a provision of the 2021 infrastructure bill aimed at “preventing digital discrimination of access based on income level, race, ethnicity, color, religion, or national origin.”

A coalition of 39 groups led by the Electronic Frontier Foundation and Center for Accessible Technology urged the FCC to take aggressive action rectifying broadband inequality by examining the socioeconomics of the neighborhoods getting the slowest speeds and the prices they pay—regardless of whether the companies intended to discriminate.

AT&T insisted in filings with the agency that the standard for discrimination should be explicit, deliberate efforts to avoid building infrastructure in areas that are populated by people of color or lower-income residents.

It also asked for subsidies to build high-speed internet in lower-income neighborhoods because, as AT&T asserted in its letter to the FCC, “most or all deficiencies in broadband access appear to result not from invidious discrimination, but from ordinary business-case challenges in the absence of subsidy programs.”

Advocates say that’s just not true. “There are very few places in the country where it is not economically feasible to deploy broadband,” said Brian Thorn, who served as a senior researcher for the Communication Workers of America, a union representing telecom employees, which has been vocal on the issue and filed its own comment to the FCC. (The CWA is the parent union of The NewsGuild-CWA, which represents employees at The Markup and The Associated Press.) He said members are tired of seeing their employers make inequitable infrastructure deployment decisions.

“We would hear from members all the time that they’re out laying lines on one side of the neighborhood and not on the other,” he said.

In a letter to the FCC, the coalition asserted that “broadband users are experiencing discriminatory impacts of deployment that are no different than the impacts of past redlining policies in housing, banking, and other venues of economic activity.”

The term “redlining” derives from efforts by the federal government to stem the tide of foreclosures during the Great Depression by drawing up maps, with the help of real estate agents, to identify areas that were safe for mortgage lending. Predominantly white neighborhoods were consistently rated better than less-white neighborhoods, which were shaded in red. Echoes of these maps still reverberate today in things like rates of home ownership and prenatal mortality.

Notes on the historical map explaining why one part of Kansas City, Missouri, was redlined cited “Negro encroachment from the north.” In that same area, AT&T offered only slow service to every single address The Markup examined.

Across Kansas City, AT&T offered the worst deals to 68% of addresses in redlined areas, compared to just 12% of addresses in areas that had been rated “best” or “desirable.”

Redlining maps frequently tracked neatly with the disparities The Markup found.

Addresses in redlined areas of 15 cities from Portland to Atlanta were offered the worst deals at least twice as often as areas rated “best” or “desirable.” Minneapolis, which is served by CenturyLink, displayed one of the most striking disparities: Formerly redlined addresses were offered the worst deals almost eight times as often as formerly better-rated areas.

Pamela Jackson-Walters, a 68-year-old longtime resident of Detroit’s Hope Village, said she needs the internet to work on her dissertation in organizational leadership at University of Phoenix online and to virtually attend church services. The slow speeds AT&T offered were a constant annoyance.

“They still haven’t installed the high-speed internet over here,” she said. “How do we get it? Are we too poor of a neighborhood to have the better service?”

Hope Village has a per capita income of just over \$11,000 and is almost entirely Black.

To add insult to injury, last fall, AT&T internet service across Hope Village went down for 45 days before being restored. This summer, Jackson-Walters’s internet went down again, this time for four weeks, she said.

Jeff Jones, another longtime Hope Village resident, noted a bitter irony amid all the service problems. “To add to the insult, I can look out my bedroom window literally, maybe 150 yards, is the AT&T service facility,” he said with a weary laugh. “I’m like, please help me! You’re right there! How can you ignore this problem that is just right in front of your face?”

Until The Markup told Hope Village residents its findings about AT&T’s pricing practices in Detroit, they didn’t know that lower-income areas were more often asked to pay the same price for slower internet.

“That’s the big piece,” said Angela Siefer, the executive director of the National Digital Inclusion Alliance, which advocates for broadband access. “Folks don’t know that they’re being screwed.”

[Return to Top](#)

Terrorism, Extremism

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	10/19 Hamas back in Syria after years of tension
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/militant-hamas-group-back-in-damascus-after-years-of-tension/2022/10/19/1c7d7986-4fa5-11ed-ada8-04e6e6bf8b19_story.html
GIST	<p>DAMASCUS, Syria — Two senior officials from the Palestinian militant Hamas group visited Syria’s capital Wednesday in the first such visit since the faction was forced to leave the war-torn country a decade ago over backing armed opposition fighters.</p> <p>The visit appears to be a first step toward full reconciliation between Hamas and the Syrian government and follows a monthslong mediation by Iran and Lebanon’s militant Hezbollah group — both key backers of Syrian President Bashar Assad. Over the years, Tehran and the Iran-backed Hezbollah have maintained their relations with Hamas, despite Assad’s rift with the Palestinian militants.</p> <p>Before the rift, Hamas had long kept a political base in Syria, receiving Damascus’ support in its campaign against Israel. Hamas’ powerful leadership-in-exile remained in Syria even after the group took power in the Gaza Strip in 2007.</p> <p>But when Syria tipped into civil war, Hamas broke with Assad and sided with the rebels fighting to oust him. The rebels are largely Sunni Muslims, like Hamas, and scenes of Sunni civilian deaths raised an outcry across the region against Assad, who belongs to the Alawites, a minority Shiite sect in Syria.</p> <p>Over the past few years, Syrian government forces have captured much of Syria with the help of Assad’s main backers Russia and Iran. The 11-year conflict has killed hundreds of thousands, destroyed large parts</p>

of the country and displaced half of Syria's pre-war population of 23 million, including more than 5 million refugees outside the country.

"The new rapprochement is a belated recognition on the part of Hamas that all roads to continuing Iranian assistance lead to Damascus," said Fawaz Gerges, professor of international relations and Middle Eastern politics at the London School of Economics. "Hamas bit the bullet. Assad's political gain is Hamas' moral loss."

On Wednesday, Khalil al-Hayeh, a senior figure in Hamas' political branch, and top Hamas official Osama Hamdan were among several officials representing different Palestinian factions who were received by Assad.

Al-Hayeh has regularly visited Beirut over the years, meeting with Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah; their last meeting was in August.

After Wednesday's meeting, al-Hayeh said Assad was "keen on Syria's support to the Palestinian resistance" and called his visit a "glorious day."

"God willing, we will turn the old page and look for the future," al-Hayeh said, adding that Hamas is against any "Zionist or American aggression on Syria."

Israel has carried out hundreds of airstrikes around Syria over the past years, mainly targeting Iran-backed fighters.

Assad told the Palestinian delegation that "despite the war that Syria is being subjected to, it did not change its stance of backing resistance by all forms," state news agency SANA reported. He added that the Syria "that everyone knew before and after the war will not change and will continue as a supporter of resistance" movements.

Hamas' re-establishing of a Damascus base would mark its rejoining the so-called Iran-led "axis of resistance" as Tehran works to gather allies at a time when talks with world powers over Iran's nuclear program are stalled.

The move by Hamas also comes after Turkey restored relations with Israel and after some Arab states, including the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, normalized relations with Hamas' archenemy Israel.

"This is a marriage of convenience, a tactical alliance based on common interest," said Gerges, adding that Hamas has become dependent on Iranian aid and has little support from Arab governments. Hezbollah has also provided Hamas with much-needed logistical support, he said.

The pro-government Al-Watan daily says Damascus will be reconciling with the "resistance branch" of Hamas and not the Muslim Brotherhood faction — an apparent reference to Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal who was once based in Damascus but is now in Qatar.

At the start of the Syrian conflict, Hamas' leadership in exile remained largely silent. But tensions grew with the increased bloodshed, and finally in January 2012, Mashaal left Syria to Qatar, one of the main backers of fighters trying to remove Assad from power.

The following September, Mashaal gave a speech in Turkey, also a backer of the opposition, proclaiming, "we welcome the revolution of the Syrian people who are seeking freedom and independence" and that "the pure blood of these great people is being shed" because they seek democracy.

Within hours, Syrian authorities sealed up all Hamas offices in the country and expelled its members to Lebanon. They have not been allowed back since until Wednesday's visit.

	<p>Al-Hayeh said the decision to come to Damascus has the support of all Hamas leadership. In an apparent reference to Mashaal, al-Hayeh said that “unilateral behaviors by some Hamas members were not approved by the group.”</p> <p>“We are here in Syria today representing the leadership that made this decision,” he said about reconciling with Damascus.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Hamas announced that Saudi Arabia released a Hamas official after three years in custody.</p> <p>Mohammed Al-Khoudary, a longtime Hamas official who had been based in the Saudi capital Riyadh, was on his way to Jordan, which agreed to host him, said another Hamas official, Izzat al-Reshq.</p> <p>Al-Khoudary was among dozens of Palestinians and Jordanians the kingdom rounded up in 2019 in a massive crackdown on the Islamic group’s supporters. At the time, Hamas said the detainees were arrested for “collecting donations for Palestinian charities, not on security charges.”</p> <p>In 2021, Al-Khoudary, 84, was sentenced to 15 years on terrorism charges that the kingdom never revealed. Other detainees received sentences of prison terms up to 22 years. Al-Khoudary’s sentence was reduced to six years.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/19 Pentagon: terror attacks in Africa up 300%
SOURCE	https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-military/2022/10/19/pentagon-says-terror-attacks-in-africa-grew-by-300-over-last-decade/
GIST	<p>Islamic extremism has exploded in Africa despite ongoing efforts by U.S. Africa Command to stifle terrorism on the continent, an August report from the Pentagon revealed.</p> <p>Conducted by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, the Pentagon’s premier analysis branch for the region, the report noted a staggering 300 percent increase in militant Islamist violence over the course of the last decade.</p> <p>More than 6,200 violent events were attributed to terrorist groups in 2022, a 21 percent increase from the previous year, the report noted. Almost 15,000 deaths were linked to the increase in terrorist-related activity.</p> <p>Nearly 95 percent of the incident surge since 2019 has come from two areas — Somalia and the western Sahel, a semi-arid region crossing northern Africa between the Sahara to the north and tropical savannas to the south.</p> <p>Both Somalia and the Sahel are actively hosting U.S. troops, but if the aforementioned statistics are any indication, that military presence has not stemmed the violence, bringing into question the effectiveness of U.S. operations in Africa, training or otherwise.</p> <p>AFRICOM currently has approximately 6,000 U.S. troops on the continent, with the greatest concentrations of U.S. personnel in West Africa and Djibouti. According to documents obtained by Rolling Stone, U.S. special operations troops deployed to 17 African nations in 2021. Naval exercises were also held last year with troops from Mauritius, Madagascar and the Seychelles.</p> <p>One measure undertaken by AFRICOM to address security concerns in the Sahel is Flintlock, the command’s largest annual special operations exercise. More than 400 service members from over 10 African partner and allied nations join U.S. personnel in the military and law enforcement exercise each year.</p> <p>When it comes to threats throughout the continent, meanwhile, the greatest number come from al-Shabab, Boko Haram and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, according to a recent report by the Africa Center</p>

for Strategic Studies. In the Sahel, the [Macina Liberation Front](#) — part of the [Jama'at Nusrat al Islam wal Muslimeen](#) coalition of extremist groups — was noted as being largely responsible for an attack incident rate that has quadrupled since 2019, according to the report.

In Somalia, U.S. troops have experienced a surge in direct involvement in counterterrorism operations against al-Shabab terrorists.

On Oct. 1, [U.S. forces took out Abdullahi Nadir](#) — a man Somali leaders called “one of the most important members of al-Shabab” — in an attack coordinated with the Somali National Army. This most recent assault followed a series of other strikes conducted throughout the summer, one of which was responsible for [killing 27 militants](#).

“The defensive strikes allowed the Somali National Army and African Union Transition Mission in Somalia forces to regain the initiative and continue the operation to disrupt al-Shabaab in the Hiraan region of central Somalia,” AFRICOM officials said of the September strike. “This operation is the largest combined Somali and ATMIS offensive operation in five years.”

Although the Biden administration reinstated the U.S. mission in Somalia just this year, a decision that followed former president Donald Trump’s January 2021 troop withdrawal, AFRICOM leaders are not necessarily hopeful that more funds will be spent on combating extremism throughout the region.

“I would say you’re not going to see a very significant change [in funding],” Army [Gen. Stephen Townsend, the previous head of AFRICOM, told Military Times in July](#). “We’re still what our department refers to as the ‘economy-of-force theater’ — also in the current lexicon, a ‘posture-limited theater,’ which means we’re still not going to get very many resources, right?”

Current national security postures indicate the war in Ukraine and threats from military powers such as China, Iran, Russia and North Korea may continue to pull funding and focus away from counterterrorism efforts in places like the Sahel.

However, Townsend’s replacement, [Marine Gen. Michael Langley](#), told the Senate Armed Services Committee during his July 21 confirmation hearing that he sees terrorism in Africa as “more of a problem today” than ever before.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/20 Evolution violent extremist cyber landscape
SOURCE	https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-2022-october-20/
GIST	<p>Bottom Line Up Front</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Terrorist and violent extremist use of the Internet continues to evolve, especially as new technologies afford nefarious actors more opportunities to radicalize, recruit, and raise funds.• Terrorist groups have relied on the internet for the diffusion of tradecraft, taking advantage of do-it-yourself “DIY” chatrooms to improve technical know-how related to artificial intelligence, 3-D printing, and drones.• Online forums can serve as incubators of extremist rhetoric, while algorithms can prioritize extremist content and in some cases contribute to an accelerated radicalization process.• It will be crucial to enlist the private sector in countering terrorism and extremism online, to forge effective public-private partnerships that can operationalize well-intended but vague and under-resourced policy prescriptions. <p>Terrorist and violent extremist use of the Internet continues to evolve, especially as new technologies afford nefarious actors more opportunities to radicalize, recruit, and raise funds. The online extremist landscape has matured significantly from the days when the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), or “Zapatistas,” in Mexico were using the Internet in the 1990s to disseminate information and white supremacists in the United States were using static websites and message boards to spread propaganda. In 2022, there are almost no terrorist or violent extremist groups without at least some kind of online presence. Over time, non-state actors have proven highly adaptive and skilled in the virtual space,</p>

able to rebound from counterterrorism actions while attempting to stay one step ahead of law enforcement authorities and intelligence agencies. In a world where extremists connect online, political boundaries, geography, and proximity are less determinative. However, it is crucial not to downplay the importance of real-world interactions, as radicalization is rarely a result of solely online behaviors.

Terrorists and violent extremists continue to seek to exploit the Internet to finance their activities and organizations. [Cryptocurrencies](#) have captured the attention of groups like the Islamic State and Hamas, while far-right extremists have also dabbled in the myriad of crowdsourcing platforms to raise money. Islamic State's "virtual plotter" model, where operatives coordinate attacks online with support around the globe, highlights the importance of the internet for networking and coordination within and among terrorist networks, echoing the increased use of the internet for licit purposes such as work, community organization and socializing, particularly in an era shaped by Covid lockdown experiences. Enabled by end-to-end encryption, this approach revolutionized attack planning for jihadist organizations. The Internet has also been a force multiplier for recruitment and radicalization, particularly as extremist narratives and ideas can be shared widely, spread quickly, and then mainstreamed into public discourse. Terrorist and extremist groups also rely on the internet for the diffusion of tradecraft, taking advantage of do-it-yourself "DIY" chatrooms to improve technical know-how related to artificial intelligence, [3-D printing](#), and [unmanned aerial systems](#) (UAS) or drones. Moreover, there is a mobilization to action or incitement aspect, wherein jihadists, far-right accelerationists, and others actively call for their followers to engage in real-world acts of violence and terrorism.

Terrorists continue to find new and innovative ways to leverage the Internet, as it remains an effective tool for radicalization. Online echo chambers reinforce pernicious narratives, perpetuate violent conspiracy theories, and spread [mis-, dis-, and mal-information \(MDM\)](#), without risk of dilution from moderate positions and critical discourse. Online interactions reinforce an 'us versus them', in-group/out-group dynamic that rewards those who adopt the most extreme positions. These narratives, often xenophobic or radically ethno-centric, are actively promulgated and spread by political and community leaders who seek to capitalize on extremist rhetoric for political gamesmanship or electoral success, mainstreaming such narratives in the process. Online forums serve as incubators of extremist rhetoric, while malicious algorithms prioritize extremist content and, in some cases, contribute to an accelerated radicalization process. The proliferation of online manifestos, particularly among far-right attackers, is a new twist to an old tactic, supplanting jihadi martyrdom tapes that were used to both inspire future attacks and sow fear and terror among civilian populations (and to blackmail any would-be attackers who might get cold feet). These manifestos live forever online and are aimed not just at radicalizing would-be supporters but also as an eternal repository to learn and refine tradecraft, weapons maintenance, and other tactics, techniques, and procedures.

Disrupting terrorist and extremist networks online has proven challenging. The past decade has witnessed the ascendance of charismatic figures who worked to effectively used online tools to promote violent ideologies - Anwar al-Awlaki, for example - who influenced and, in some cases, had direct contact with dozens of individuals who committed attacks or were part of disrupted plots. He also used his online popularity to transcend the divide between al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, a feat few have been able to accomplish. Silicon Valley and social media companies have taken important actions with respect to content moderation, however begrudgingly. Initiatives like the Christchurch Call, the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT) and Tech Against Terrorism, for example, have provided important platforms for research, learning, and international cooperation. However, one of the key tools to address terrorist and extremist content online, [de-platforming](#), has been far from the panacea some had hoped for, as extremists migrated from mainstream tech platforms like Facebook and Twitter to more fringe sites, including 4chan, 8chan, Gab, and Telegram, to name just a few.

Moreover, tailored counternarratives and strategic communications campaigns aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism have been inconsistent at best and amateurish at worst, leading many to be pessimistic about future efforts in this space. There are also fundamental differences among some key stakeholders; some of the legislation relating to terrorist use of the internet would not be possible to replicate in the United States, for example, in view of the Constitutional protections of free speech. As such, it becomes difficult for international actors to take action against individuals or groups that base their

online operations in the U.S. With the advent of the Metaverse and other emerging technologies and platforms, it will be crucial to enlist the private sector in countering terrorism and extremism online. Forging effective public-private partnerships – ones where government, private sector organizations, communities, and civil society organizations can cooperate and collaborate on tailored solutions - that can operationalize well-intended but vague and under-resourced policy prescriptions, will be imperative to create actionable solutions that mitigate and prevent the proliferation of extremist content online.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/20 ISIS fighters terrorize Mozambique
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/10/18/mozambique-isis-cabo-delgado-gas/
GIST	<p>PEMBA, Mozambique — The boy’s scars streak under his ears and circle his neck, dark razor marks left by the Islamic State militants who overran his village. The fighters tried to recruit him. When he refused, the torture began. He was 13.</p> <p>But the boy’s deepest trauma surfaces when he talks about what happened to his uncle. His eyes dim and his voice gets low, almost disappearing in the breeze.</p> <p>“They beheaded my uncle that day, along with others,” recalled R.A., who is now 16 and living in a refugee camp. “He was begging for help, but I could do nothing. I was too scared. I could hear the machete striking him. I could hear his screams.”</p> <p>In northern Mozambique, one of the Islamic State’s newest branches is fueling a brutal insurgency that has raged out of sight in small villages and remote forests since late 2017. Women are kidnapped and kept as sex slaves, boys are forced to become child soldiers, beheadings are weapons of terror. The conflict has claimed about 4,000 lives; nearly 1 million people have fled their homes, separating countless families.</p> <p>Victims shared their stories with The Washington Post on the condition that they be identified only by their first names, and, in R.A.’s case, by his initials, because his first name is uncommon. They still live in fear of the militants.</p> <p>The violence and instability also threaten one of the world’s most lucrative deposits of natural gas.</p> <p>As Russia’s war in Ukraine drives up gas prices, fueling fears of scarcity across Europe, northern Mozambique’s reserves of liquefied natural gas, or LNG — the third largest in Africa — are viewed as vital.</p> <p>Even before the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February, the U.S. government approved nearly \$6 billion in loans and risk insurance to help get Mozambique’s nascent natural gas industry off the ground.</p> <p>American and European oil and gas companies, including ExxonMobil and French giant TotalEnergies, have multibillion-dollar projects in the resource-rich province of Cabo Delgado, in the country’s far north. But the five-year-old Islamist insurgency there has halted most production.</p> <p>The U.S. and European governments are trying to help Mozambican forces fight the militants — and get the gas flowing.</p> <p>“They have completely stopped LNG operations from moving forward,” said a U.S. Embassy official in the capital, Maputo, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss the situation freely. “There certainly is a new urgency for LNG with Ukraine.”</p> <p>Africa has become a new frontier for Islamist militant groups in recent years, with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State spreading rapidly across the continent. Though the groups still claim global aspirations, they are engaged here in local conflicts, capitalizing on weak governments and exploiting old grievances and inequities.</p>

Last year, the State Department [designated](#) the Islamic State of Mozambique, or ISIS-Mozambique, as a foreign terrorist organization, though the group is believed to have fewer than 500 fighters. The United States also imposed sanctions on the group's leader, Abu Yasir Hassan, though it's unclear whether he is still in charge, or is even still alive.

The Pentagon's Africa Command is training Mozambican troops to improve their counterterrorism capabilities. The European Union is spending \$89 million to train and equip 11 rapid-reaction units of the Mozambican army, in part because Portuguese and Italian oil companies also operate here alongside TotalEnergies.

The militants "are in a key area, so their influence has been quite large," the U.S. official said. "In order to create terror, you don't need that many people."

[ISIS-Mozambique](#) has always been small in relative terms, but the weakness of the Mozambican armed forces allowed the group to make rapid gains in recent years, seizing towns and cities, and exacting a terrible toll on communities across the north.

R.A. said the militants beheaded his uncle and other men in his village for not disclosing the positions of Mozambican forces. After the executions, two fighters beat him with the butts of their rifles as he sat in the sun, hands tied. When he refused to take up arms for them, he said, they brought out the razor blade.

"I was tortured for two hours," recalled R.A., who is tall and slim, and wore cutoff blue jean shorts and red slippers. As he spoke, his words slowed and his eyes drifted to the ground.

R.A.'s ordeal could not be independently verified, but similar claims were made by other victims interviewed by The Post in northern Mozambique last month, and corroborated by accounts from aid workers and community activists. The Post also reviewed graphic social media footage showing the aftermath of militant attacks in the region.

When the extremists tired of torturing him, R.A. said, he was forced to walk several hours to their jungle base, the blood still running down his chest.

The roots of the rebellion

The insurgency began in October 2017, fueled by a complex and combustible mix of poverty, inequality and Islamist radicalization. In Cabo Delgado, residents have long felt politically and economically isolated, even after natural gas and minerals were discovered here.

"This is first and foremost a rebellion of local youth who have been frustrated and marginalized, the fishermen and local miners who saw their businesses extinguished," said Dino Mahtani, former deputy Africa director for the International Crisis Group (ICG).

The economic exclusion dovetailed with growing Islamist extremism in the region.

"The war came from outside," said Sheikh Nasrullahi Dula, a leader of Mozambique's Muslim community, pointing to ultraconservative clerics from Kenya and Tanzania who started madrassas here in 2010 that began to radicalize young men in Muslim-majority Cabo Delgado. "They taught the opposite of what we preached. They taught that women were nothing and the government is not to be respected."

Militant local youths began to denounce more moderate religious leaders like Dula and pushed to ban alcohol and stop women from working. Their resentment grew as elites drawn from President Filipe Nyusi's Makonde ethnic group secured business deals in the province at the expense of the Mwani and Makua ethnic minorities, the ICG said in a [report](#) last year. The ethnic tensions have simmered since the Portuguese colonial era.

Local discontent deepened with the discovery of ruby and gas deposits. The government cleared many residents off their lands to make room for foreign concessions. Prices for rents and commodities soared.

The extremists “found a very fertile place to recruit unemployed, frustrated youth,” said João Feijó, a Mozambican sociologist who has studied the roots of the war.

In early 2017, the [government sent police](#) to eject thousands of artisanal miners from a commercial ruby mine. The police “burned houses, they raped women and men. They beat, they tortured,” Feijó said. “Suddenly, they broke all these possibilities for the youth to get some earnings. But they didn’t provide an alternative.”

The Mozambican president’s office, the Defense Ministry, Cabo Delgado’s governor and other local officials did not respond to The Post’s requests for comment or interviews.

When the uprising began months later, some of the first militant recruits were miners, according to Western diplomats and analysts.

By 2018, the Islamic State had embraced the militants, who now counted Tanzanians and other foreigners among their ranks, including defectors from al-Qaeda affiliates in East Africa, analysts said. Some Tanzanians are now leaders while the lower-level militants are largely Mozambicans, primarily Mwani and Makua youths.

It remains unclear how strong ISIS-Mozambique’s ties are to the central Islamic State leadership in Syria and Iraq. The militants here carry the trademark black Islamic State flag and pledged allegiance to the terrorist network two years ago. On social media and in its online magazine, Islamic State leaders have lauded recent attacks in Mozambique, including some targeting Christians.

“There is communication going back and forth,” the U.S. Embassy official said. “It is probably a more independent ISIS branch than others, but the links are real enough for us to declare it.”

An international fight

In 2019, desperate to stem the insurgency, the Mozambican government hired mercenaries from Russia’s Wagner Group, which is run by an oligarch with close ties to [Russian President Vladimir Putin](#). But the infamous private military, which is now [fighting in Ukraine](#) and a slew of other African countries, departed several months later after suffering heavy casualties, according to Western diplomats and analysts.

Mozambique then turned to Rwanda and several southern African nations, whose forces entered the conflict last year. Regional leaders fear the violence could spill into their countries and further destabilize the coast of East Africa, which is already plagued by [other terrorist groups](#).

The joint African forces — better trained and equipped than their Mozambican counterparts — have pushed ISIS-Mozambique out of the northern cities and towns they seized last year, including Palma, the epicenter of natural gas exploration. But the insurgents have expanded to new areas, including the province’s southern districts near the regional capital, Pemba, and have even conducted raids into Tanzania.

They use guerrilla tactics, hiding within local communities or in the vast forests of Cabo Delgado, an area the size of South Carolina. In small groups, numbering no more than 10 fighters, they have staged a steady stream of hit-and-run attacks since May, when Islamic State leaders declared ISIS-Mozambique to be an autonomous branch operating in its own “province.”

“Right now, it is absolutely impossible for them to control a big city, populations, or even seize a little bit of land for more than 24 hours,” said Brig. Gen. Nuno Lemos Pires, until recently the European Union’s mission force commander in charge of training Mozambican army units. “That said, it doesn’t mean that things are under control.”

On a [visit](#) to Mozambique last month, the European Union's foreign policy chief, [Josep Borrell](#), announced \$15 million in new funding for the joint African forces, just days after Islamist militants beheaded six civilians and killed an Italian nun in Nampula province.

Borrell said the attacks are "a stark reminder that the fight against terrorism is not over and that, unhappily, it is spreading."

The violence has prevented aid organizations from assisting the tens of thousands of people who have fled their homes in recent months. Nearly 60 percent of the displaced are children. Scores of health clinics and schools are closed or destroyed. More than a million people are facing hunger, according to the United Nations.

"The situation is still volatile," said Phipps Campira, operations director for Save the Children. "The sporadic attacks are destabilizing our efforts to reach out to displaced people."

Compounding matters, the international focus on Ukraine has caused shortfalls in assistance here, [as in other parts of the world](#). Donors have provided less than 60 percent of the \$388 million sought by the United Nations this year, according to U.N. data, making it hard to help even those who have reached camps in safer areas.

"Some days, they go without food," Campira said.

A long trail of terror

When the militants overran the city of Mocimboa da Praia in 2020, they arrived at Ulenca's door. At gunpoint, they forced her and two female cousins into a car and took them to a base, where they joined other kidnapped girls and women. They were later separated and taken to other bases, she remembers.

Ulenca never saw her cousins again.

After a three-day walk, she arrived at the second base. Thirty other women were there, and it soon became clear why. Ulenca said she was handed over to a 24-year-old Tanzanian, whose nom de guerre was Fawzani. Ulenca, who was 20 at the time, was to become his "wife."

That night, when she refused to have sex, Fawzani beat her with a bamboo stick and raped her.

"All the fighters were raping the women," said Ulenca, now 22, her voice cracking. "After every rape, I prayed to God to stop my suffering and to get me back home and find my family."

She lived at the base for two years.

The fighters were mostly Mozambican, but the leaders were from Tanzania, she recalled. Many spoke Swahili, which she understood, as well as local languages. There were other foreigners, too.

Most of the fighters carried AK-47 rifles, Ulenca said. They carried out military drills every day and built deep trenches to take cover from helicopter assaults. Many fighters wore stolen Mozambican army uniforms.

"They would say 'Islam is the only religion. We want to establish an Islamic state,' " she recalled some fighters telling her.

An Islamist insurgency in Mozambique is gaining ground — and showing a strong allegiance to the Islamic State

Ulenca said she witnessed more than 10 executions, including those of several women. Some had refused to fight. Others had tried to escape. The women were shot in the back of the head. The men were beheaded.

“Everyone on the base was forced to watch,” Ulenca said. “It was a lesson to others not to commit mistakes.”

Two other women held at different bases said they witnessed similar atrocities.

Ana, 25, was forced to watch her husband’s beheading with her two small daughters. The only reason she wasn’t raped, she said, was because the fighters thought she had gone mad.

International forces may have arrested the momentum of the militants, but their brutality continues. Most people on the ground say there is no military solution to the conflict.

The United States and the European Union are spending millions to help develop Cabo Delgado — building schools and creating jobs to prevent young men from joining the militants. Under international pressure, the Mozambican government approved a reconstruction plan, tacitly acknowledging that its neglect contributed to the insurgency.

“Are the root causes of everything that has happened solved? Of course not,” Pires said. “That is a huge step that we still have to fight for for a long, long time.”

The victims will carry their trauma forever.

When R.A. reached the jungle base, he said, he was tied up and beaten again. His tormentors were not much older than him. Most carried guns and machetes. On the third day, by his count, as the militants took a nap, two other abducted boys loosened the ropes around their wrists and freed R.A. as well.

“As we ran, we were always looking back to see if they were chasing us,” he remembered.

Ulenca escaped in May. By then, the militants had lost ground. During a bombing raid, she and another woman managed to get away. They walked for 17 hours until they reached a Mozambican army position, she said.

Ana and her girls fled in April while they went to fetch wood. Ancha, now 5, hardly remembers what happened to her dad. But Amina, who is 8, can’t forget. “They killed my father,” she said in a shy voice. “I still think about it when I sleep.”

[Return to Top](#)

Suspicious, Unusual

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	10/20 World’s biggest animal disease outbreak
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/oct/20/scientists-rush-to-create-vaccine-for-worlds-biggest-animal-disease-outbreak
GIST	<p>Tucked between motorways in the west of the city, the drab brick building belonging to Madrid’s Complutense University stretches the length of a football pitch. Inside, a series of sterile laboratories – capable of handling the world’s most dangerous pathogens – can be found along a brightly lit hallway.</p> <p>This is the frontline of the EU’s battle against another, albeit lesser-known, global pandemic: the highly infectious African swine fever (ASF), which has swept through dozens of countries, forcing farms to cull millions of animals.</p> <p>Long endemic to Africa, ASF is harmless to humans but often fatal to pigs. The current outbreak, believed to threaten around three-quarters of the world’s herds, can be traced to the 2007 appearance of the virus in</p>

Georgia. Aided by the ability to [survive up to 1,000 days](#) in frozen meat and persist for long periods on clothing and vehicles, it soon began to spread beyond the Caucasus.

In 2018, ASF turned up in China, home to around half of the world's pigs. By 2019, there were concerns that [as many as 100 million pigs](#) had been lost. Two years later the virus was [confirmed to be in Germany](#), home to one of the EU's largest swine herds.

From Papua New Guinea to the Dominican Republic, reports of the virus rolled in from [45 countries](#) across five continents, forcing the protective culling of pigs, leaving family farms devastated and markets reeling from export bans.

“This is the biggest animal disease outbreak we've ever had on the planet,” says Dirk Pfeiffer, a veterinary epidemiologist at City University of Hong Kong. The only tool currently available to battle the virus, he adds, “is to emphasise to farmers the importance of enhanced biosecurity”.

Against this background, pressure has grown to create an ASF vaccine. “While it is possible to eradicate ASF without vaccination, it takes a long time to do it,” says José Manuel Sánchez-Vizcaíno, a professor of animal health at Complutense University in Madrid. “You have to know the virus really well and understand where it hides and its tricks.”

The Iberian peninsula stands out as a [singular example](#); after a strain of ASF was discovered in Portugal in 1957 – and again in 1960 – the Spanish and Portuguese governments waged a decades-long battle, using preventive culling and protecting domestic pigs from vectors such as soft ticks and wild boars, before declaring the virus eradicated in 1995.

The experience – along with the [meteoric rise](#) in Europe's wild boar population – has cemented Sánchez-Vizcaíno's view that a vaccine is the best hope for halting ASF. The scientist is coordinating an [EU-funded global consortium](#) that, since its launch in 2019, has homed in on three vaccine candidates with the potential for use on domestic pigs and wild boars.

The focus is now on carrying out large-scale tests to see how the candidates interact with other illnesses or pregnant sows. Broad questions continue to hover over the investigation, such as whether the vaccine developed in [Spain](#) would be equally effective in other regions and how often it would need to be administered. The aim is to have the vaccine ready to roll out by late 2024, according to Sánchez-Vizcaíno.

Similar efforts are playing out around the world. Researchers at Harbin Veterinary Research Institute in China say they have [made advances](#) on a live attenuated vaccine, while the Catalan research institute CReSA-IRTA has found [multiple potential vaccine candidates](#).

At the Pirbright Institute in the UK, a team focused on ASF has been refining its own potential vaccine candidate for the past two years. “People often ask why it is taking so long,” says Linda Dixon, a virologist who leads ASF research at the institute.

“People are quite nervous about it because the thing with a live attenuated vaccine – which all of these are – is basically you're releasing a live virus into the field. And there's not enough of a history to know exactly what's going to happen.”

With several promising vaccines now identified and rigorously tested for safety, the focus has shifted to large-scale trials. “Whenever you start to vaccinate hundreds of thousands of pigs, you might find out some things that weren't apparent from the smaller scale,” Dixon says.

The risks were laid bare this year after Vietnam [announced](#) in June it would become the first country in the world to administer an ASF vaccine. After an outbreak of the virus in 2019 led to the culling of [more than 2 million pigs](#), the Vietnamese government planned to administer the vaccine to 600,000 animals in 20 provinces.

However, less than three months later, [state media reported](#) that vaccinations had been temporarily suspended following the deaths of around 750 inoculated pigs. According to [VietNamNet](#), which is affiliated with the Ministry of Information and Communications, 23,344 doses of the vaccine were supplied from July to August this year.

It is not known how many of the deaths were caused by the vaccine, which had been produced in [Vietnam](#) after being developed at the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and licensed to companies around the world.

An investigation is currently under way to assess what exactly happened. A report released by the company that produced the vaccine suggested that some of the farms in three provinces had failed to heed instructions that it must be used only on healthy pigs between eight and 10 weeks old, according to Douglas Gladue, a senior scientist at the USDA's Plum Island Animal Disease Center.

"The vaccine was used off-label and on farms where the pigs were not healthy," Gladue says. "The other 17 provinces that are giving the vaccine under supervision don't have any problems. Vaccination is continuing in those provinces."

News of the Vietnam trials rippled across the global community of scientists tackling ASF, reinforcing the immensity of the challenge that lay ahead. "It was a cold shower," says Sánchez-Vizcaíno in Madrid. "Nobody was expecting that."

Researchers have received a sharp reminder of the potent virus they are facing off against in this pandemic: more resilient, more complex and less understood than the coronavirus, he adds. "Covid is a really simple virus. Not like ASF."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/19 Oceans are warming faster than ever
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/10/19/oceans-warming-climate-change/
GIST	<p>The world's oceans have been warming for generations, a trend that is accelerating and threatens to fuel more supercharged storms, devastate marine ecosystems and upend the lives and livelihoods of millions of people, according to a new scientific analysis.</p> <p>Published this week in the journal Nature Reviews, it finds that the upper reaches of the oceans — roughly the top 2,000 meters, or just over a mile — have been heating up around the planet since at least the 1950s, with the most stark changes observed in the Atlantic and Southern oceans.</p> <p>The authors of the review, who include scientists from China, France, the United States and Australia, write that data shows the heating has both accelerated over time and increasingly has reached deeper and deeper. That warming — which the scientists said likely is irreversible through 2100 — is poised to continue, and to create new hot spots around the globe, especially if humans fail to make significant and rapid cuts to greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>The findings underscore both the key role the oceans have played in helping to offset human emissions — oceans absorb more than 90 percent of the excess heat trapped within the world's atmosphere — and also the profound implications if the warming continues unabated. If it does, the areas near the surface of the oceans could warm by two to six times their current temperature, the scientists wrote.</p> <p>"Global warming really does mean ocean warming," Kevin E. Trenberth, a co-author of the review and a scholar at the National Center for Atmospheric Research, said in an interview from New Zealand. "The best single indicator that the planet is warming is the ocean warming record."</p>

That record, comprised of thousands of temperature measurements across the globe over decades, he said, shows a “relentless” trajectory. “The warming has been accelerating, and the most rapid warming rates have been in the last 10 years or so,” he said.

The consequences of hotter oceans already are on display in numerous ways.

Scientists attribute about 40 percent of global sea-level rise to the effects of thermal expansion in ocean water. Warmer oceans also speed the melting of ice sheets, adding to rising seas. They disrupt traditional weather patterns and deepen drought in some areas. And they fuel more intense hurricanes, as well as create the conditions for more torrential rainfall and deadly flooding.

The authors cite one example from August 2017, when the Gulf of Mexico reached the warmest summertime temperature on record to that point. That same month, Hurricane Harvey tore through the gulf, exploding from a tropical depression to a major hurricane and dumping catastrophic amounts of rain on Houston and other areas.

“All of these things are part of the fact that there’s extra energy available” in the oceans, Trenberth said.

In addition, the analysis found that future warming could cause precipitous drops in certain fisheries, causing the loss of livelihoods and food sources. The trend also makes it “inevitable” that marine heat waves will become more extensive and longer-lasting — a reality that can trigger toxic algal blooms and fuel massive mortality events among coral reefs, kelp forests and other ocean life.

While the authors make clear that oceans around the world are projected to continue warming over the coming decades, even if humanity begins to cut greenhouse gas emissions, that warming will not happen equally across the globe. Largely due to circulation patterns, some regions are projected to warm faster than others and are likely to grapple with more intense impacts.

The paper also underscores that while many uncertainties remain, how that plays out is “critical” to the consequences humans will likely experience, said Joellen Russell, a professor and oceanographer at the University of Arizona.

“A small fraction more [mixing] would slow our warming, and a small fraction less mixing would accelerate our warming,” said Russell, who was not involved in this week’s analysis. “That is incredibly important for people to understand.”

The latest findings are largely in line with the growing body of research has documented — that oceans have long stored astounding amounts of energy from the atmosphere and mitigated the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions, but that over time profound impacts are unavoidable on land and at sea.

In its most recent assessment on the state of climate science earlier this year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said it is “virtually certain” that the upper swath of the oceans have warmed over the past half-century, and that human-caused carbon emissions are the main driver.

“Global mean sea level has risen faster since 1900 than over any preceding century in at least the last 3,000 years,” the IPCC wrote. “The global ocean has warmed faster over the past century than since the end of the last deglacial transition (around 11,000 years ago).”

Still, researchers say the amount of future warming depends on what humans do — or don’t do — to rein in the greenhouse gases that ultimately are heating oceans. And better measuring, understanding and mitigating the problem should be a global priority.

If the world can steer toward a future with the kind of rapidly shrinking emissions envisioned by the Paris climate agreement, the author of this week’s review write, that would likely “lead to a detectable and lasting reduction in [the] ocean warming rate, with noticeable reductions in climate-change impacts.”

	<p>Russell said the latest findings emphasize that it “absolutely matters” that humans cut emissions as quickly as possible, to limit warming in the oceans and the ripple effects that ultimately has for humans.</p> <p>“Our oceans are doing us a profound service,” she said. “As a scientist and a mom, I pray about the fact we need to bend that curve in my lifetime ... It is important that we do this.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/19 North America bodies of water drying up
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/bodies-water-north-america-drying-due-drought-climate/story?id=91737496
GIST	<p>Bodies of water all over North America are drying up as a result of drought and a decrease in precipitation, experts told ABC News.</p> <p>Earlier this year, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicted that the 22-year megadrought affecting the West would not only intensify but also move eastward.</p> <p>That prediction appears to be coming into fruition, with about 82% of the continental U.S. currently showing conditions between abnormally dry and exceptional drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.</p> <p>And while the U.S. and North America continue to witness water levels dropping in crucial rivers, lakes and reservoirs, a mixture of climate change and poor water management policies are causing similar events all over the world, experts told ABC News.</p> <p>"Rivers all over the world are running really low," especially the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in Iraq, as well as significant bodies of water in countries like Italy, Romania, France and China, Jonathan Deason, professor of the Environmental and Energy Management Program at George Washington University.</p> <p>The experts said that a two-pronged approach that includes climate change mitigation and better water management policies will be crucial as bodies of water continue to dry up. But so much damage has already been done, that even drastic improvements or reductions in emissions will not immediately impact reducing the stress on water levels, they said.</p> <p>Here are some recent examples of bodies of water drying up in North America:</p> <p>Shipwreck, human remains found in the Mississippi River</p> <p>Decreasing water levels along the Mississippi River, one of the most important trade routes in the country, have been causing ripple effects worldwide.</p> <p>Earlier this month, barges with shipping containers began idling along the sandbars of the river that previously contained ample water.</p> <p>Waters along the Mississippi have receded so much that a ferry that likely sunk in the late 1800s or early 1900s was discovered near Baton Rouge, earlier this month, and possible human remains were located by a resident in Coahoma County, Missouri, on Saturday.</p> <p>Much of the region surrounding the Mississippi River is experiencing conditions between abnormally dry and severe drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.</p> <p>The Mississippi River at Memphis, Tennessee, hit its lowest level in recorded history on Monday, with several other gauges at risk to break records as well.</p> <p>Supply chain delays for goods like grains, cement and fuel, which travel through New Orleans to the Gulf of Mexico, could be a consequence of a dried-up Mississippi, experts say.</p>

"What happens is, commercial vessels have trouble, have obstacles popping up," Deason said. "Waters used to be so deep, it didn't make a difference for navigation."

Ripple effects will include inflation and the prices of food and goods increasing, Deason added.

The water levels will likely get worse, and recede even more, before they begin to rise again, Jonathan Remo, an associate professor at Southern Illinois University's School of Earth Systems and Sustainability, told ABC News last week.

Great Salt Lake continues to shrink

The Great Salt Lake, the largest saltwater lake in the world and largest terminal lake in the Western Hemisphere -- is continuing to lose its volume at alarming rates.

By 2017, the lake had lost half of its water since the first settler arrived in 1847, according to a study published in Nature Geoscience. It is now one-third of its original capacity and has reached unsustainable levels, researchers told PBS.

The loss of water in the lake, which is now at its lowest levels ever, is already causing a dangerous ecological ripple effect throughout Utah, and it will likely get worse, scientists told ABC News in July. More than 800 square miles of river have been exposed as a result of the dry-up.

"I don't know how much time we have," Joel Ferry, the director of Utah's Department of Natural Resources, told ABC News.

While most of the decline is attributed to development in the region, resulting in large population increases, climate change and drought are to blame as well, according to researchers.

Animals and plants near the lake are already bearing the burden of the dry-up, Kyle Stone, a wildlife biologist for the state of Utah, told ABC News. The salinity in the water is increasing as water levels drop, killing algae, a source for brine shrimp, which serves as food for more than 10 million birds that stop at the lake during their migration patterns, Stone said.

In addition, if the lake were to dry out, dust storms would be a great concern due to the decades of heavy metals and toxic substances that remain trapped in the sediment, scientists said.

Tens of thousands of dead salmon wash up in Canada

Researchers in British Columbia happened upon a disturbing sight when monitoring salmon populations in the Neekus River in the Heiltsuk territory amid the spawning season earlier this month.

Once the scientists got there, they discovered about 65,000 dead pink salmon on the banks of the dried-up creek instead. The smell was so bad that it was burning the researchers' noses and eyes, forcing them to cover their faces, Allison Dennert, an ecologist at the Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, British Columbia, told the BBC.

"It was the worst mass mortality of salmon, pre-spawn salmon, that I've ever seen," Dennert said.

Little rain has fallen in the region, which has been experiencing high temperatures in recent months-- a continuation of an atmospheric ridge that has been plaguing the Pacific Northwest with record-breaking temperatures.

The large school of fish may have been fooled by a single rain shower that coincided with high tide, making their way upstream in an attempt to spawn for the season, the researchers said.

The tens of thousands of fish eventually sucked up all of the oxygen in the low water levels of the creek. Once they were rendered immobile and began to die off, the ammonia left in the water exacerbated the mass death event.

More than 70% of the salmon had not had the opportunity to spawn before water levels in the creek dropped, Dennert tweeted on Oct. 4.

"I would say it's pretty safe to say this is a consequence of climate change," Dennert said.

Lack of snow melt to replenish the Platt River

Stunning images out of Nebraska shed light into the harsh reality of the consequences of diminishing amounts of snow pack.

The Platte River in central Nebraska, which is fed by snow melt from the Rocky Mountains in Wyoming and Colorado that feed into Lake McConaughy, has not had a chance to replenish as less and less snow falls over the winter.

Photos of a portion of Interstate 90 near Kearney, Nebraska, show a completely dehydrated river bed under a bridge that was previously filled with river water.

More than a third of the Pratte River is in extreme or worse conditions, with precipitation outlooks for the fall forecast to be dry, the Drought Center tweeted on Monday.

Irrigation has depleted most of the reservoirs in the northeast and southwest Nebraska, which are both in extreme drought, KLKN, the ABC affiliate in Lincoln, Nebraska, reported.

Widespread areas around the state have been "quite dry and quite warm" since early July, causing water demand and usage for crops to increase dramatically, Brian Fuchs, climatologist for the National Drought Mitigation Center, told KLKN.

While it is not unusual for the river to go dry during the irrigation season, experts are monitoring the river downstream of Columbus as an indicator of the overall health of the river, Jason Farnsworth, executive director of the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, told KLKN.

"If down below the Loup River, you have no flow, that's sort of a really big deal," Farnsworth said.

Supplies of drinking water continue to dwindle in the West

As the megadrought in the West persists, the reservoirs providing water to households and the vast agriculture industry are getting dangerously low.

Water supplies along the Colorado River and the two largest reservoirs in the country that it supplies -- Lake Mead and Lake Powell -- are continuing to recede.

Further west, reservoirs in California as drying up as well, Pablo Ortiz, climate and waters scientist at the Union of Concerned Scientists, told ABC News.

Lake Oroville and Lake Shasta, the two biggest reservoirs in the state, are barely above 30% capacity, and every major reservoir in California except for one is below the historical average, according to the California Department of Water Resources.

In addition, more than 60% of monitored groundwater wells in California are below normal conditions, and more than 21% are currently experiencing historically low levels, Ortiz said. Workers who are drilling into groundwater wells have told Ortiz that groundwater levels in some regions have dropped up to 10 feet, Ortiz said.

"This impacts hundreds of communities that depend on groundwater as their primary source of drinking water," as well as the agriculture industry, he said.

HEADLINE	10/19 Maritime piracy lowest levels in decades
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/featured/maritime-piracy-incidents-at-lowest-levels-in-decades/
GIST	<p>The International Chamber of Commerce’s International Maritime Bureau (IMB) is calling for regional and international players to sustain their efforts, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea, as global piracy and armed robbery incidents reach their lowest levels since 1992.</p> <p>IMB’s latest global quarterly piracy report details 90 incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships in the first nine months of 2022, the lowest recorded figure in three decades.</p> <p>Perpetrators were successful in gaining access to the vessels in 95% of the reported incidents which are broken down as 85 vessels boarded, four attempted attacks, and one vessel hijacked. In many of the cases vessels were either at anchor or steaming when boarded, with nearly all the incidents occurring during the hours of darkness.</p> <p>Though these are amongst the lowest reports in decades, violence to crew continues with 27 crew taken hostage, six assaulted and five threatened. IMB says the risk to the crew, however petty or opportunistic the incident, remains real.</p> <p>Gulf of Guinea</p> <p>Of the 90 global piracy and armed robbery incidents in IMB’s report, 13 have been reported in the Gulf of Guinea region – compared to 27 over the same period of 2021 – signaling a positive and significant decline in the number of reported incidents in the region off west Africa which emerged as the world’s biggest piracy hotspot in recent years.</p> <p>Much of this success is a result of the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency’s Deep Blue Project, which was initiated in 2021. The main objective of the project is to secure Nigerian waters up to the Gulf of Guinea. The project tackles maritime security on land, sea, and air and is the first integrated maritime security strategy in West and Central Africa with the aim of tackling the incidences of piracy, sea robbery, and other crimes at sea. In June 2022, two unmanned aircraft systems, nine interceptor patrol boats and 10 armored vehicles were added to the project’s existing assets.</p> <p>International collaborations in the Gulf of Guinea have signaled intent and provide another strong deterrent in the region. In November 2021, Danish Armed Forces responded to an incident, exchanged fire with pirates and sank the perpetrators’ vessel.</p> <p>Counter-piracy efforts in the region will be further bolstered by a strategy announced in July 2022 by the Nigerian government and a coalition of global shipping stakeholders. The strategy establishes a mechanism to periodically assess the effectiveness of country-piracy initiatives and commitments in the Gulf of Guinea. Targeted at all stakeholders operating in the region, it will identify areas of improvement and reinforcement in order to eliminate piracy. The plan is split into two mutually supportive sections: actions which can be overseen by the Nigerian Industry Working Group, and actions which require engagement with other regional and international partners.</p> <p>IMB Director Michael Howlett said: “We commend the efforts of the coastal authorities of the Gulf of Guinea. While the decline is welcome, sustained and continued efforts of the coastal authorities and the presence of the international navies remain essential to safeguard seafarers and long-term regional and international shipping and trade. There is no room for complacency.”</p> <p>Singapore Straits</p> <p>Incidents in the Singapore Straits continue to increase with 31 reports in the first nine months of 2022, compared to 21 in the same period last year. Vessels underway, including several large vessels and tankers, were boarded in all 31 reports and in most cases, ship stores or properties were stolen. Crews also</p>

continue to be at risk with weapons reported in at least 16 incidents, including some involving very large bulk carriers and tankers.

“While these are so far considered low-level opportunistic crimes, with no crew kidnappings or vessel hijackings, littoral states are requested to increase patrols in what is a strategically important waterway for the shipping industry and for global trade,” Howlett said.

The Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) is also concerned with the persistent occurrence of incidents in the Singapore Strait, particularly the clusters of incidents off Tanjung Pergam, Bintan Island and Nongsa Point, Batam Island. ReCAAP [said](#) in August that three incidents were reported while ships were underway in the Singapore Strait during July 30–31 2022. Two of the incidents occurred on July 30 on board bulk carriers when they were underway off Tanjung Pergam, Bintan Island and ReCAAP believes there is a possibility that the same group of perpetrators is responsible for both incidents as the modus operandi of the perpetrators are similar. In the two incidents, the perpetrators were armed with knives, sighted in the engine room and engine spare parts were reported missing.

A further concern is that the IMB’s Piracy Reporting Center believes there is a degree of underreporting as well as late reporting of incidents from these waters and encourages Masters to report all incidents as early as possible so that local authorities are able to identify, investigate and apprehend the perpetrators.

South America

In South America, the number of reports from Callao anchorage in Peru has dropped from 15 in the first nine months of 2021 to eight in 2022. Additionally, five incidents have been reported at Macapa Anchorage, Brazil including one on August 30, where six security and duty crew were assaulted and tied up by perpetrators who boarded an anchored bulk carrier.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/20 DOJ: 5 Russians sanctions evasion scheme
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/10/20/russians-arrested-sanctions-evasion-ukraine/
GIST	<p>The U.S. Justice Department charged five Russian nationals Wednesday in an alleged sanctions evasion scheme that involved millions of barrels of smuggled oil from Venezuela and U.S. military technology that was traced to the battlefield in Ukraine.</p> <p>Federal prosecutors in Brooklyn accused Yury Orekhov and Svetlana Kuzurgasheva of purchasing “sensitive” military and dual-use technologies from the United States and shipping them to Russian companies, including some that service the country’s defense sector.</p> <p>Orekhov and Kuzurgasheva are accused of helping Russians acquire items including advanced semiconductors and microprocessors, which can be used in fighter aircraft, missile systems and other military technology, the Justice Department said. In some cases, the electronic components were found in Russian weapons platforms seized from the battlefield in Ukraine. They were charged with bank fraud conspiracy, money laundering conspiracy, conspiracy to defraud the United States and other counts.</p> <p>Russian nationals Timofey Telegin and Sergey Tulyakov, who control sanctioned Russian companies that received some of the shipments, also face several charges, including money laundering conspiracy and conspiracy to defraud the United States.</p> <p>The Justice Department also accused Orekhov and the son of a Russian governor, Artem Uss, of smuggling hundreds of millions of barrels of oil from Venezuela through a front company that the pair co-owned in Germany. The oil was allegedly sent to clients in China and Russia in illegal multimillion-dollar deals brokered by two Venezuelan nationals, Juan Fernando Serrano Ponce and Juan Carlos Soto, who were also charged Wednesday.</p> <p>As the war in Ukraine drags on for its eighth month, the United States has dialed up pressure on Moscow and parties that cooperate with Russia. In late September, the Biden administration announced new</p>

	<p>sanctions that aim to restrict the Russian defense industry's access to technology and penalize Russian and Belarusian officials.</p> <p>The measures were aimed at reducing "the capacity of the Russian military machine to regenerate its ability to threaten Ukraine," national security adviser Jake Sullivan said at the time.</p> <p>Breon Peace, U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of New York, called the seven defendants "criminal enablers for oligarchs." They face up to 30 years in prison, and the United States has moved to extradite Orekhov and Uss, who were arrested in Germany and Italy, respectively.</p> <p>"Their efforts undermined security, economic stability and rule of law around the world," Peace said in a statement.</p> <p>In a separate case unsealed by federal prosecutors in Connecticut on Wednesday, four people from Latvia and Ukraine were charged with violating U.S. export laws by trying to send an advanced, computerized grinding machine to Russia. Called a "jig grinder," the item is export-controlled and has the potential to be used in nuclear proliferation and defense programs, the Justice Department said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/20 Bomb explosions Myanmar prison kill 8
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/20/killed-in-suspected-parcel-bomb-explosions-at-myanmars-insein-prison
GIST	<p>At least eight people have been killed in explosions at Myanmar's main prison for political detainees after two bombs exploded on Wednesday morning.</p> <p>Three prison staff and five visitors, including a 10-year-old girl, died after the bombs hit a crowd queueing to drop off parcels for inmates at Insein Prison, junta authorities said in a statement.</p> <p>The visitors were delivering parcels to prisoners when the explosion occurred at about 9.40am, according to News of Myanmar, an online news service sympathetic to the country's military government.</p> <p>The blasts occurred inside and outside the parcel reception office near the main iron gate of the prison in Yangon.</p> <p>State-owned MRTV said the explosions were caused by "mines inside parcels" while the military's information office said an unexploded bomb had also been found in a parcel. At least 13 visitors, including a nine-year-old boy, and five prison personnel were reported to be being treated for injuries at Insein township hospital.</p> <p>The prison has been notorious for decades for holding political prisoners under various military governments whom often rely on friends or family for food and medicine supplies.</p> <p>Several resistance groups engaged in struggle against the military government, including the Yangon revolution force, Yangon urban guerrillas and the general strike committee, quickly released statements condemning the attacks for hurting civilians.</p> <p>However, a little-known anti-government group known as the special task agency of Burma later posted a statement on Telegram saying it had carried out the attack as "retaliation against (junta chief) Min Aung Hlaing" and the continued oppression of revolutionary fighters by prison personnel. The group said the civilian casualties were caused by indiscriminate gunfire by security forces after the blasts.</p> <p>"Today ... the special task agency of Burma (STA), carried out two attacks to execute the prison head. We're retaliating against Min Aung Hlaing and ... the prison officers for continuously oppressing our revolution comrades," Reuters cited the statement as saying.</p>

	<p>The south-east Asian nation has been in turmoil since a military coup last year, with swathes of the country engulfed by fighting.</p> <p>About 2,367 civilians have been killed in a crackdown on resistance, according to detailed lists compiled by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, a rights watchdog group.</p> <p>Photos of Wednesday’s bombings distributed by the military’s information office show items scattered by the blasts and blood on the floor inside the building where parcels for prisoners are received.</p> <p>A resident who lives near the prison’s entrance gate told The Associated Press by phone that he heard about 10 gunshots after hearing the two explosions but did not know if they caused any casualties.</p> <p>One witness queueing at the parcel counter told Agence France-Presse the first blast hit at about 9.30am (0300 GMT). “Then another two went off quickly. After that we heard shooting as well,” said the witness, who requested anonymity. “I saw some people bleeding. The glass around the counter was all shattered.”</p> <p>According to another witness, security forces locked down the area around the sprawling colonial-era prison after the explosions.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/19 Arrest: guns in vehicle near US Capitol
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/19/us/politics/police-arrest-guns-capitol.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The Capitol Police arrested a man and detained two other people on Wednesday afternoon after discovering guns inside their vehicle on the Capitol grounds.</p> <p>The driver, Tony H. Payne, 80, of Tunnel Hill, Ga., was charged with possessing an unregistered firearm, having unregistered ammunition and carrying a pistol without a license, the Capitol Police said in a statement.</p> <p>The police investigated, they said, after noticing Mr. Payne’s white van parked illegally on the grounds between the Capitol and the Supreme Court. Mr. Payne then told the officers that he had guns with him.</p> <p>“The driver, another man and a woman were all detained during the search,” the Capitol Police said in a statement. “Officers found two handguns and a shotgun inside the van.” The police added that the three people said that “they were here to deliver documents to the U.S. Supreme Court.”</p> <p>Dozens of people are arrested every year for bringing weapons to the Capitol, according to the Capitol Police.</p> <p>Security measures on the Capitol grounds — which include barricades, metal detectors and guarded checkpoints — have been tightened in the wake of the Jan. 6., 2021, attack, and lawmakers are experiencing a surge in threats and confrontations. Democratic lawmakers have also proposed expanding the ban on firearms on the grounds to lawmakers, who are exempt from the rule but still may not carry guns onto the floor of the House or the Senate.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	10/19 Massive backlog mentally ill defendants
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/investigations/mentally-ill-defendants-jail-washington/281-b65a8b1a-16c8-428e-85ee-3551bb6d0ebb
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — The state of Washington is experiencing a self-described “crisis” with the biggest backlog in state history of mentally ill defendants sitting in jails waiting for court-ordered access to medical help.</p> <p>Record-breaking wait times behind bars for people with serious mental illness – defendants deemed unable to understand the charges against them – are creating chaos, suffering, and a potentially massive financial toll for the state.</p>

The KING 5 Investigators found the failure to comply with [court orders](#) and [state law](#) to move defendants deemed incompetent to stand trial into state psychiatric hospitals in a timely manner could cost the Department of Social and Health Services ([DSHS](#)) \$300 million in fines that are currently in abeyance.

“It’s obviously a big concern,” said [Dr. Brian Waiblinger](#), DSHS chief medical officer and acting medical director at [Western State Hospital](#) in Steilacoom near Tacoma.

“That’s the taxpayer’s dollars, so of course, it’s concerning. I would rather have those dollars spent on patient services than fulfilling some sort of fine that doesn’t go directly to patient care.”

Seven years ago, after civil rights advocates including [Disability Rights Washington](#) and [ACLU Washington](#) filed a class action [lawsuit](#) against DSHS, known as the [Trueblood case](#), a federal court ruled the state was “violating the constitutional rights of some of its most vulnerable citizens” by allowing mentally ill people accused of a crime to wait in jail for weeks or months before receiving treatment aimed at stabilizing them. The service is called competency restoration – efforts to bring patients to a point where they can participate in their legal case.

“Our jails are not suitable places for the mentally ill to be warehoused while they wait for services. Jails are not hospitals, they are not designed as therapeutic environments, and they are not equipped to manage mental illness,” wrote Chief United States District Judge [Marsha Pechman](#) in the 2015 Trueblood [Order](#).

Pechman ordered DSHS to provide competency evaluations to people presenting with serious mental illness within 14 days of incarceration and if deemed necessary, competency restoration services within seven days.

Despite the federal court’s ruling and millions of dollars spent to add resources, state records show wait times have gotten worse, not better.

In hearings this year at the King County Superior Court in Seattle, public defenders said their clients were suffering from the state’s failures.

“(My client) desperately needs medical attention and each day that she spends (in jail) compounds that harm,” said one attorney at a hearing in July. “Your Honor, the suffering here is egregious, and my client should not bear the brunt of the state’s misconduct and willful and intentional mismanagement.”

“When I visited (my client) I’ve seen the conditions personally that he is living in, and they are horrifying,” another public defender said in July. “He is in a concrete bunker all day. These are people that are living in their own excrement, in their own filth for all hours of the day.”

State in contempt

Trueblood Court Monitor [reports](#) show in 2015 the average wait time for competency restoration services at Western State Hospital was less than a month. In 2022, the wait has increased more than four times that with people waiting four months or longer.

“I’m very disappointed. It’s a real human tragedy,” said ACLU Washington Legal Director [La Rond Baker](#). Baker was on the legal team that litigated the Trueblood case that led to the seven-day deadline to move defendants to the hospital. “I was shocked and I’m still in shock that seven years later we’re in this position. We’re such a progressive and liberal state but we really don’t fund and don’t prioritize the provision of mental health services for people who are most dire in need of it.”

DSHS: We’re caught in a 'perfect storm'

Top state officials who oversee Western State Hospital and programs for mentally ill defendants in Washington said the state was hit with a “perfect storm” this year that led to the increase in wait times. Dr. Thomas Kinlen, director of the DSHS [Office of Forensic Mental Health Services](#), said the effects of

COVID-19 are hitting the state especially hard now. Western State Hospital had several hospital admissions freezes during the pandemic, which created a backlog of cases now clogging the system.

“(We’re in) a competency crisis for sure,” Kinlen said. “It’s crushing. It’s disheartening. Each morning I want to see the waitlist lower.”

State officials said they’re also plagued by critical staff shortages. At Western State, approximately a quarter of the jobs are sitting unfilled.

“We’re in a situation where we might have money for a program but then we have to have staff to run it,” Kinlen said. “We’re doing everything possible to get them out of (jail) as quickly as possible. We don’t want them in jail. That’s not what we view as the treatment they need.”

DSHS officials said the biggest factor in elongated wait times is an increase in demand for competency restoration services. In the last year alone, Western State saw a 40% increase in referrals from courts in western Washington, according to a DSHS [court declaration](#).

“We knew ahead of time that services would be increasing over time. We knew that,” said Waiblinger, the DSHS chief medical officer. “What happened recently, we don’t understand that, and we didn’t predict it, certainly. I don’t think anyone expected that to happen.”

[Alexander Jay](#) of Seattle is one of the defendants in the King County Jail waiting for medical help to restore competency to stand trial. His case has drawn widespread [attention](#) for his alleged random acts of violence perpetrated on strangers, including an [alleged murder on Capitol Hill](#) and an [attack in the International District](#) caught on Sound Transit security cameras in March.

In April, King County Superior Court [Judge Johanna Bender](#) found Jay was incompetent to stand trial and ordered DSHS to begin treatment at Western State within seven days. Jay’s been waiting behind bars for more than seven months.

“The amount of time that Mr. Jay is being required to wait is barbaric,” said Bender at a hearing in September.

“It’s unbelievable. You want to go on with your life, you want it to be done,” said Kim Hayes, a Harborview trauma nurse who Jay [allegedly attacked](#) in the light rail station as she commuted to work. She suffered a broken clavicle and ribs and thought she would have been killed if she didn’t fight back.

“It changes your life forever. And you never feel as safe as before,” Hayes said. “I want to move on with my life, but I would move on quicker if there was a resolution for him getting into an appropriate bed, an appropriate place. I want him to get the care he needs.”

Why hundreds of millions of dollars in fines could come due

As the Trueblood case progressed through the court system, Pechman, the U.S. District judge, twice found DSHS in contempt for failing to meet deadlines.

“(DSHS has) failed to meet all deadlines, including those set by themselves,” wrote Pechman in a [2017 order](#). “Their excuses remain the same and their planning remains inadequate... The court is hopeful (the state) will stop their procrastination and false promises.”

At the time she imposed sanctions to try to compel “compliance with orders.” From 2016 to 2018, lack of compliance cost DSHS \$88 million in fines. After that, a 2018 [settlement agreement](#) put the fines on hold, but they’re still being tallied for failing to meet deadlines. State records compiled by KING 5 show if the total bill had to be paid today, it would exceed \$300 million.

“That’s an unbelievable number,” said Kinlen, the DSHS forensic mental health services director.

The number is growing. In August, the recorded fine against the state was \$13,455,000. The month of September saw the highest fine to date, at \$14,046,250.

The settlement agreement makes clear that if the state is found to be in "material breach" of the agreement, the accumulated fines will be reduced to judgment, meaning the bill would be due.

"The state is always aware that (we may have to pay the fines)," Kinlen said.

"We are thinking innovatively," Waiblinger said. "We're having these conversations probably every day. We're having these strategy conversations: 'What can we do differently?'"

The Trueblood fines reduced to judgement, paid to date, have been used to enhance the state's efforts to help people get services before crimes are committed. DSHS and the Washington State [Health Care Authority](#) have created several "[diversion programs](#)" aimed at reducing both contact with the legal system and the demand for competency services. Diversion programs are located in counties including Clark, King, Pierce, Snohomish, Thurston, Spokane and Yakima.

In addition to the diversion programs, DSHS has added approximately 160 additional psychiatric beds since the Trueblood trial in 2015. More new beds are expected to become available in the next few years:

- 58 new beds at Western State Hospital, to open in early 2023.
- 16 beds at a facility at the [Maple Lane](#) campus near Rochester, opening in 2023.
- 30 Maple Lane beds for people found not guilty by reason of insanity to open in 2023.
- 48 beds in [Clark County](#) near Vancouver scheduled to open in 2024

"We're adding capacity as fast as we can, but adding beds, building beds takes time to do," said Kinlen. "Unfortunately, the demand for competency restoration services continues to grow and grow and grow."

From the bench, Bender, the King County judge, said DSHS should have expected an increase in needed services and planned accordingly.

"The delay imposed by the government is unconscionable," Bender said. "It is inconsistent with the behavior of a civilized society. It is absolutely outrageous."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	10/19 SPD student officer charged w/cyberstalking
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/spd-student-officer-charged-with-cyberstalking-accused-of-harassment/
GIST	<p>A Seattle police student officer has been placed on unpaid administrative leave after he was charged with cyberstalking for allegedly harassing a woman online over a span of several months, the department said Wednesday.</p> <p>Jafar Al-Salehi is accused of sending repeated messages and texts to the woman between Nov. 20, 2021, and Aug. 19, 2022, according to a domestic violence criminal complaint. The charge he is facing is a gross misdemeanor.</p> <p>Al-Salehi, 22, is still in his probationary period within the department's field training program, which was set to end in March.</p> <p>Al-Salehi first messaged the woman on Facebook through a dating app on Nov. 8, 2021, according to charges filed by the Seattle City Attorney's Office. The woman told police she was concerned that Al-Salehi knew her last name since it wasn't on her profile, according to the charges.</p> <p>After some correspondence they arranged to meet at a West Seattle diner on Nov. 11. The woman later went with him to his home, where the officer insisted on showing her his badge and firearm, according to the charges. She declined and Al-Salehi drove her back to restaurant and her car.</p>

	<p>The woman decided to not continue seeing Al-Salehi, the charges say. However, she told police that he continued to send her messages via Instagram. She blocked him but he created a second account, according to the charges. Al-Salehi sent her more messages on Facebook on Dec. 5, 2021, the charges allege.</p> <p>He then messaged her on OKCupid to apologize for being “rude,” charging documents say. However, he continued to harass the woman by sending unwanted messages, according to documents.</p> <p>The woman told police she grew more concerned on Dec. 12, 2021, when she received a text message from Al-Salehi despite the fact she never gave him her phone number, according to the charges. She told police she believed Al-Salehi used police resources to find her number, according to documents.</p> <p>Al-Salehi messaged the woman again on Aug. 8 from an unknown number and she immediately blocked that number as well, the charges allege. She told police she was worried about Al-Salehi’s access to a firearm, the charges say.</p> <p>Detectives in the department’s Domestic Violence Unit investigated the allegations and forwarded a case to the City Attorney’s Office.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/19 Fatal shooting Seattle's Central District
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/man-fatally-shot-in-seattles-central-district-2/
GIST	<p>A man was fatally shot Wednesday evening in the Central District, Seattle police said.</p> <p>Witnesses reported gunfire near East Union Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Way just after 6:30 p.m., the police said in a blotter post. Other callers reported seeing a possible gunman fleeing the area, police said.</p> <p>Arriving officers aided the wounded man until Seattle Fire Department medics arrived and took him to Harborview Medical Center, where he later died, police said.</p> <p>No information was provided on what led to the shooting.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/19 Charges: violating US export laws
SOURCE	https://www.justice.gov/usao-ct/pr/european-nationals-and-entities-indicted-charges-violating-us-laws-their-attempt-export
GIST	<p>A superseding indictment charging individuals and companies in Europe with violating United States export laws and regulations by attempting to smuggle a dual-use export-controlled item to Russia was unsealed yesterday in the District of Connecticut.</p> <p>U.S. Attorney Vanessa Roberts Avery; Assistant Attorney General Matthew G. Olsen of the Justice Department’s National Security Division; Andrew Adams, Director of Task Force KleptoCapture; Special Agent in Charge Matthew B. Millhollin of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), Boston; Special Agent in Charge Rashel D. Assouri of the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Office of Export Enforcement, Boston; and Special Agent in Charge David Sundberg of the FBI New Haven Division made the announcement.</p> <p>The indictment alleges that, beginning in 2018, Eriks Mamonovs, 33, and Vadims Ananics, 46, both citizens of Latvia who operated CNC Weld, a Latvia-based corporation, conspired with Stanislav Romanyuk, 37, a citizen of Ukraine and resident of Estonia who operated Estonia-based BY Trade OU, and others, including Janis Uzbalis, 46, of Latvia, and individuals in Russia and a Russia-based company, to violate U.S. export laws and regulations and smuggle a jig grinder that was manufactured in Connecticut to Russia. A jig grinder is a high-precision grinding machine system that does not require a license to export to European Union countries, but does require a license for export and reexport to Russia.</p>

because of its potential application in nuclear proliferation and defense programs. At no time did the defendants apply for, receive or possess a license of authorization from the U.S. Department of Commerce to export or reexport the jig grinder to Russia, as required by the Export Control Reform Act of 2018 and the Export Administration Regulations (“EAR”), which restrict the export of items that could make a significant contribution to the military potential of other nations or that could be detrimental to U.S. foreign policy and national security.

U.S. authorities, working with Latvian authorities, intercepted the jig grinder in Riga, Latvia, before it was to be shipped to Russia.

Ananics, Mamonovs and Uzbališ were arrested yesterday in Riga, Latvia. Romanyuk was arrested in Tallinn, Estonia, on June 13. They are currently detained and the United States is seeking their extradition.

“The indictment alleges that these defendants attempted to smuggle a high-precision export-controlled item to Russia where it could have been used in nuclear proliferation and Russian defense programs,” said U.S. Attorney Vanessa Roberts Avery. “The danger created by such conduct is profound. I thank HSI, the Department of Commerce and the FBI, and our partners in Latvia and Estonia, who thwarted this alleged scheme and are working to bring these defendants to justice in a U.S. court of law.”

“The power and precision of American technology must not be put to use by the Kremlin’s war machine,” said Andrew Adams, Director of Task Force KleptoCapture. “Enforcement against efforts to illegally export and reexport controlled U.S. technology is critical in ensuring that superior American technology isn’t exploited by Russia in this unjust war. The arrests in Latvia demonstrate that smugglers and fraudsters will be apprehended and prosecuted notwithstanding the sophistication of evasion networks operating far from U.S. shores.”

“These individuals are alleged to have conspired to export a piece of machinery that can be used for nefarious purposes, including in defense applications to build weapons of war,” said Matthew Millhollin, Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in New England. “HSI works hand-in-hand with our partners domestically and abroad to further our mission to prevent sensitive U.S. technology and commodities from reaching the shores of hostile countries. These arrests and the seizure of the jig grinder are the result of the tenacious investigative work of our special agents and partners and show what can be achieved through these partnerships.”

“This three-year investigation is a testament to the excellent cooperation between our domestic and international law enforcement partners,” said Special Agent in Charge Rashel D. Assouri, U.S. Department of Commerce’s Office of Export Enforcement, Boston Field Office. “The Office of Export Enforcement is unwavering in its aggressive pursuit to investigate illegal exports to Russia.”

“This indictment is the culmination of a great collaborative law enforcement investigation,” said David Sundberg, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI New Haven Division. “The alleged conspirators in this international export and money laundering scheme will now face justice in the very system they manipulated and violated for financial gain.”

The superseding indictment, which was returned by a federal grand jury in Hartford on July 7, 2022, charges Mamonovs, Ananics, Romanyuk, Uzbališ, and others, with conspiracy, an offense that carries a maximum term of imprisonment of five years; violation of the Export Control Reform Act, an offense that carries a maximum term of imprisonment of 20 years; smuggling goods from the United States, an offense that carries a maximum term of imprisonment of 10 years; and international money laundering conspiracy, an offense that carries a maximum term of imprisonment of 20 years. Mamonovs is also charged with making false statements to the U.S. Department of Commerce, an offense that carries a maximum term of imprisonment of five years.

The indictment also charges CNC Weld, BY Trade OU with conspiracy, violation of the Export Control Reform Act, smuggling goods from the United States, and international money laundering conspiracy.

	<p>An indictment is merely an allegation, and each defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.</p> <p>This investigation is being conducted by HSI field offices in New Haven, Portland (Ore.), and the Hague, Netherlands; the U.S. Department of Commerce's Office of Export Enforcement in Boston; and the FBI. The Prosecutor-General's Office of the Republic of Latvia, the Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Estonia, Latvian Tax and Customs Police, Estonian Tax and Customs Board, and the Latvian State Police are assisting the investigation.</p> <p>This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Rahul Kale and Konstantin Lantsman of the District of Connecticut, and Trial Attorney Matthew Anzaldi of the Justice Department's National Security Division. The Justice Department's Office of International Affairs is providing valuable assistance.</p> <p>The investigation was coordinated with the Justice Department's Task Force KleptoCapture, an interagency law enforcement task force dedicated to enforcing the sweeping sanctions, export controls, and economic countermeasures that the United States, along with its foreign allies and partners, has imposed in response to Russia's unprovoked military invasion of Ukraine. Announced by the Attorney General on March 2 and run out of the Office of the Deputy Attorney General, the task force will continue to leverage all of the Department's tools and authorities to combat efforts to evade or undermine the collective actions taken by the U.S. government in response to Russian military aggression.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	10/19 Interpol: financial, cybercrimes top concern
SOURCE	https://www.interpol.int/News-and-Events/News/2022/Financial-and-cybercrimes-top-global-police-concerns-says-new-INTERPOL-report
GIST	<p>NEW DELHI, India – The findings, part of INTERPOL's first-ever Global Crime Trend report, saw more than 60 per cent of respondents rank crimes such as money laundering, ransomware, phishing and online scams as high or very high threats.</p> <p>Moreover, more than 70 per cent of respondents expect crimes such as ransomware and phishing attacks to increase or significantly increase in the next three to five years.</p> <p>The report, which is restricted to law enforcement, brings together data received from INTERPOL's 195 member countries alongside information and detailed analysis from the organization's data holdings and other sources. Showing how crime areas converge in complex and mutually reinforcing ways, the report notes that understanding this complexity is crucial to inform collective decision-making by police worldwide.</p> <p>"This initiative, which we will continue to build upon in the coming years, represents a genuine asset to law enforcement agencies across the globe," the Secretary General added.</p> <p>The report was presented at the 90th INTERPOL General Assembly meeting, taking place this week (18-21 October) in New Delhi.</p> <p>Financial crime-as-a-service</p> <p>Financial crimes and cybercrime are invariably linked, as a significant amount of financial fraud takes place through digital technologies (making it 'cyber-enabled') and cybercriminals also depend on financial fraud to launder their illicit gains. In this way, while 'cybercrime-as-a-service' is a well-known criminal concept, the pandemic has also hastened the emergence of 'financial crime-as-a-service', including digital money laundering tools that can prove critical for criminals seeking to cash out.</p> <p>Respondents ranked money laundering as the number one crime threat in the INTERPOL report, with 67 per cent ranking it 'high' or 'very high' in their list. Ransomware was the second highest-ranking threat, at 66 per cent, and the crime threat expected to increase the most (72 per cent).</p>

Most disturbing is perhaps the related rise in online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA), which 62 per cent of respondents expect to increase or significantly increase – the third highest-ranking future crime threat. The demand for, and production of, OCSEA materials also increased significantly during the pandemic.

While drug trafficking has traditionally dominated crime threat lists, cyber-enabled financial crime has increased precipitously in recent years, notably throughout the global COVID-19 pandemic. During and following lockdowns, rates of digitalization accelerated, with professional and personal activities performed almost exclusively from home and online.

Crime has also moved online, and cyber-enabled financial crimes, such as business email compromise, CEO fraud (where cybercriminals impersonate executives), e-commerce scams and investment fraud, have escalated in nearly every region. Today's ransomware attacks target 'big game' targets, including major corporations, governments and critical infrastructure.

To maximize harm and illicit profit, strategies have shifted to techniques like double extortion, where victims' data or files are both encrypted and threatened with public exposure, compounding the risks of business disruption and reputational damage.

Earlier this year, INTERPOL launched its Financial Crime and Anti-Corruption Centre (IFCACC) to provide a coordinated global response against the exponential growth in transnational financial crime. Just last month, an IFCACC-coordinated operation saw 75 suspected members of West-African financial crime rings arrested across 14 countries, intercepting more than USD 1 million and invaluable assets and intelligence along the way.

Two resolutions on strengthening INTERPOL's response to both financial crime and OCSEA through increased engagement by member countries have been submitted to the General Assembly for approval.

A regional lens

Breaking down the results by five world regions, the INTERPOL report shows that while some crime threats rank highly across all geographical zones, others differ according to regional and national factors.

Africa

In Africa, phishing and online scams were deemed both the biggest current threat (83 per cent) and the crime most likely to increase in the next three to five years (72 per cent).

The leading role that African countries have played in mobile money transactions and the digitalization of the financial sector has brought countless advantages to the region. A byproduct of this rapid growth, however, is a sharp increase in online banking fraud, credit card fraud and cryptocurrency scams.

Human trafficking, drug smuggling and organized crime are also major concerns according to the report's results.

Americas and the Caribbean

Illicit firearms trafficking was the top crime threat (88 per cent) in the Americas and Caribbean region according to respondents, ahead of ransomware (84 per cent) and OCSEA (83 per cent).

The INTERPOL report predicts that 3D printing will make it easier for criminals to create homemade weapons, including 'ghost guns' that can be produced without identifiers like serial numbers, making tracing illicit firearms more difficult. During a 2022 INTERPOL anti-firearms trafficking operation, authorities in St Kitts and Nevis made their first seizure of ghost guns, which were assembled using 80 per cent pistol frames.

Cybercrime topped the crimes that regional law enforcement perceive as future threats, with online scams, ransomware and business email compromise mentioned by more than 60 per cent of respondents.

Asia and the Pacific (APAC)

Financial crime was considered the top crime threat in the APAC region, specifically financial fraud (76 per cent) and money laundering (67 per cent), alongside the trafficking of synthetic drugs, which 67 per cent of respondents considered a high or very high threat. Synthetic drugs, or psychotropics, are also the second most frequently indicated drug type on INTERPOL notices or diffusions from the APAC region, the report notes.

Synthetic drug trafficking is expected to increase or significantly increase in the future according to 67 per cent of law enforcement respondents from the region, as well as cyber threats such as ransomware (79 per cent), phishing attacks, business email compromise, identity theft and online extortion (63 per cent respectively).

Europe

A substantial 76 per cent of respondents from Europe expect OCSEA to increase or increase significantly in the next three to five years. The INTERPOL report notes that the demand for livestreaming abuse has steadily increased in recent years, likely intensifying during the pandemic. While live distance child abuse most often take place in Southeast Asia, cases in the European Union have also recently been detected.

The top three threats currently facing Europe are phishing and online scams (62 per cent), money laundering (60 per cent) and synthetic drug trafficking (57 per cent), according to the respondents.

Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

The biggest crime threat, and the one most likely to increase in the near future, according to 89 per cent of respondents from the MENA region, is the trafficking of precursor drugs. Several sources mentioned in the INTERPOL report note that cannabis is the most pervasive criminal drug market in North Africa. However, the largest quantities of amphetamine – namely captagon – seized worldwide are consistently from the Middle East, where a majority of the drug is produced.

Cyber crimes, such as computer intrusion, phishing attacks and ransomware also ranked high among current (78 per cent) and future (89 per cent) crime threats. The reports notes that some Middle Eastern countries are among the most targeted nations globally for cybercrime, and that cybercriminals in this region appear to carefully select industries possessing sensitive customer data in hopes of maximizing financial gain.

[Return to Top](#)

Information From Online Communities and Unclassified Sources/InFOCUS is a situational awareness report published daily by the Washington State Fusion Center.

If you no longer wish to receive this report, please submit an email to intake@wsfc.wa.gov and enter UNSUBSCRIBE InFOCUS in the Subject line.

DISCLAIMER – the articles highlighted within InFOCUS is for informational purposes only and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Washington State Fusion Center, the City of Seattle, the Seattle Police Department or the Washington State Patrol and have been included only for ease of reference and academic purposes.

FAIR USE Notice All rights to these copyrighted items are reserved. Articles and graphics have been placed within for educational and discussion purposes only, in compliance with 'Fair Use' criteria established in Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976. The principle of 'Fair Use' was established as law by Section 107 of The Copyright Act of 1976. 'Fair Use' legally eliminates the need to obtain permission or pay royalties for the use of previously copyrighted materials if the purposes of display include 'criticism, comment, news reporting,

teaching, scholarship, and research.' Section 107 establishes four criteria for determining whether the use of a work in any particular case qualifies as a 'fair use'. A work used does not necessarily have to satisfy all four criteria to qualify as an instance of 'fair use'. Rather, 'fair use' is determined by the overall extent to which the cited work does or does not substantially satisfy the criteria in their totality. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use,' you must obtain permission from the copyright owner. For more information go to: [≤http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>](http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml)

THIS DOCUMENT MAY CONTAIN COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL. COPYING AND DISSEMINATION IS PROHIBITED WITHOUT PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNERS.

Source: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>

[Return to Top](#)